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CENTRAL TRUTHS.

CENTRAL TRUTHS.

BY THE REV.

CHARLES STANFORD,

AUTHOR OF

"*SYMBOLS OF CHRIST;*" "*JOSEPH ALLEINE;*" *POWER IN WEAKNESS,*" &c., &c.

"*Where there is no visible truth wherein to centre, error is as wide as men's fancies, and may wander to eternity.*"

STRICKLAND GOUGH, 1730.

FOURTH THOUSAND.

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Preface.

THIS book was first published ten years ago, and inscribed as a token of affectionate respect to the Rev. EDWARD STEANE, D.D., the Author being at that time his colleague in the ministry at Denmark Place, Camberwell.

"The discourses were not intended to form a consecutive series; and the title, 'Central Truths,' was given to them collectively, because, although they are miscellaneous, they all mainly aim to set forth those elementary doctrines of the Gospel from which all others seem to radiate and grow."

DUP. EXCH. 23 JAN 1903

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To this statement, then given, the Author has nothing to add but an expression of grateful pleasure at the kind reception which his work has met with, and of humble hope that the Divine Master will continue to bless it with a measure of usefulness.

Camberwell, May 13th, 1859.

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CENTRAL TRUTHS.

Foundation Stones.

"How firmly they stand,
Who piercing the sand,
Have reached and have built on the durable Rock!
The wind and the wave,
However they rave,
Shall assault them in vain with impetuous shock.

"But he that hath willed
His dwelling to build
On the loose shifting sand of pretence and applause,
He hath not a home;
For should the flood come,
He must fall by the stroke of reality's laws.

"O great is the fall,
When downward sink all
Temples, houses, and palaces, built on the sand;
Though stately and gay,
More mighty than they
Is the tempest, which nothing but rock can withstand."

"Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit."—HEBREWS vi. 1, 2, 3.

THERE are two kinds of infancy—the infancy of childhood, and the melancholy infancy of age—the infancy of fresh, opening, unworn life,

and the infancy which is the effect of relapse, exhaustion, and decay. As it is in nature, so it is in grace. Some are infants for the second time—they have "*become* such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Some of Paul's stirring exhortations were addressed to persons of this class. They looked, indeed, like men of reverend experience, they bore the Christian's badge, and grasped the pilgrim's staff; yet they still asked for infant's food, and their souls could only find nutriment in the mere "milk" of ritualism, while the grand spiritualities of truth, and the more advanced lessons of the Christian life, were too much for them to bear. Hence he says to them:—

"When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one should teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of age have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

The sentence to which our thoughts are now invited is that which continues the thread, and completes the sequency of this appeal:—

"Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine

of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit."—Heb. vi. 1, 2, 3.

"Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," are *we* all "teachers?" Have *we* all reached "the fulness of the stature of the perfect man?" Like the ancient racer in the Pythian course, all "air and fire," all deep vehement life, does every one of us leave his chamber of prayer each morning "rejoicing like a strong man to run a race?" Ah, no! Some of us are children still; and children, not from recent birth, but from deteriorated piety. Let us, then, study Paul's words, as if they were specifically addressed to us by name.

I. Here is a statement made with regard to the first principles of the religion we profess. He tells where they are revealed, and what they are.

And, first, he would have his readers to understand that the principles of the doctrine of Christ are the "first principles of the *oracles of God;*" he uses the two expressions interchangeably, as if they both meant the same thing. By the oracles of God we mean, in general, all that God's Spirit says to us

through the medium of this book, when we come reverentially to consult it.

> "What though no answering voice is heard,
> The oracles, thy written word,
> Counsel and guidance still impart,
> Responsive to the upright heart."

But by "the oracles of God," the apostle meant more especially the older portions of this book; and his immediate object was to assert that the "doctrine of Christ," at which the Hebrews stumbled, was in reality no fresh revelation, but that all its primary rudiments and elements had been taught in their own Mosaic Scriptures. It was as if he had said, "My countrymen, you are slow in acquiring familiar acquaintance with the doctrine of Christ. It strikes you as something strange and new. You are surprised that if it be Divine it was not taught before; but it *was* taught before. 'I write no new commandment unto you, but that which you have heard from the beginning.' 'I say none other things than Moses in the law and the prophets did write.' You turn from me with an air of blank and dull bewilderment, and say, 'Ah, Lord God! doth he not speak parables?' But I am no novelist in theology. I utter no dark sayings on my harp. Those very ceremonies to which you cling so tenaciously, all preach Christ crucified, as I do; the simple difference is, that

they preach in mysterious hints, what I and my inspired companions sound forth in full completeness, and clear victorious tones."

And this assurance appears to be as needful as ever. As in those times there were professed disciples of Moses who looked with suspicion on the Christian oracles, so in these times there are professed followers of Christ who speak in slighting terms of the Mosaic oracles—in both cases from the vague idea that the Mosaic and the Christian systems teach different principles. But their principles are essentially the same. They both set forth Christ. The law was not destroyed by the Gospel, but only consummated. The one *changed* into the other, as a blossom changes into fruit, when it fades into beauty, dies into life, and passes from trembling evanescence into a more solid and permanent form. Christ has always been the substance and meaning of all revelation. A deep truth was contained in the saying of the ancient church, "There were Christians on earth before there were Jews." Even from Paradise to Patmos, "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" have been taught with increasing gradations of development, as "the first principles of the oracles of God,"—old, as well as new.

This being established, Paul proceeds to enumerate these principles; and he appears to state them

miscellaneously, without reference to their natural station or logical order.

And, first, "*Repentance from dead works.*" Dead works are works performed by one whose life is separated from the life of God. When anything is separated from its source, there must be death. Separate the stream from its fountain, and there is death Separate the branch from the tree, and there is death. Separate the body from the soul, and there is death. Separate the soul from God, and there is death. There may be natural life, but there is spiritual death. The intellect lives; the will lives; the heart lives; the conscience lives; the instrumental faculties of action are all alive; but all the works, to the production of which they combine, not being instinct with the love of God, are *dead* works. It must, of course, be admitted that the affections of many who are blind, and deaf, and dumb, and dead to God, are, towards father or mother, wife or child, brother or sister, or friend, all enchanting vivacity and tenderness; but human excellence, parted from God, is like the fabled flower which, according to the Rabbies, Eve plucked when passing out of Paradise;—severed from its native root, it is only the touching memorial of a lost Eden; sad, while charming—beautiful, but dead. Thus separated, men may have the quality of manliness, but not of godliness;

towards one another there may be melting love, heroic daring, unbending justice, most magnificent generosity; but whatever they may be with regard to men, with regard to God they are dead. Alienated from His life, even good works are dead works; dead while they live; dead as the dead leaves on the dead bough, parted from its parent stem.

It is the doctrine of a merely human religion, that while we should repent of our evil works, we should trust in our righteous works for heaven. But it is the doctrine of Christ that we should repent of all the works wrought while our souls were dead in sin; and when we feel the quickening thrills of a new life, this repentance will take place. Actions that once were censured as wrong, and actions that once were applauded as meritorious, will all alike be looked upon as dead, since all alike were performed by a nature parted from its God. Those actions may be right towards man, and as developments of secular excellence they will receive their appropriate secular reward; but their want of all reference to God must be a fatal want. Righteous as they seem to be, and righteous as they are in their own department, they are tainted with that sin of sins, apostacy. Like Paul, therefore, we shall repent of our righteousness as well as our sinfulness; and what things were gain to us, we shall count as loss.

The recollection of dead professions, dead alms, dead prayers, dead acts of worship, will afflict us with pungent distress; and even the most splendid performances of service will, to use the language of Augustine, only appear in the light of "splendid sins." While a Hebrew of the Hebrews, wrapt in his phylacteried robe, and erect in self-sufficiency, might stand before the altar, and say within himself, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess:" —another Hebrew, just made "alive from the dead" by the powers of grace, would, if he thought over works of his own exactly similar to these, regard them as only death and worthless; the very considerations that so exalted his companion would only humble him. With changing cheek, with lips touching the dust, and with a heart too full for loud language, he would only be able to murmur forth the prayer—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" Such would have been the case in every age of revelation, for this repentance, now so clearly asserted and demanded as an essential of the Christian scheme, has from the first, been a "first principle of the oracles of God."

But, secondly, turning *from* sin implies turning to God. We shall have no disposition to renounce

our dead works, until, united to the living God by faith, we are partakers of His life. *Faith towards God,* therefore, is another elementary principle of the oracles. It is not meant by this expression that the discovery of *the existence* of God is peculiar to inspiration; or that *this* truth is one of its first principles. God's existence is a truth which it takes for granted from its opening line. It found the world in possesion of it. Before the Bible of grace was opened, this truth had appeared in each living letter and illuminated page of nature's glorious Bible. Before the first voice of this oracle was heard, man had sought the dim wood, or the silent mountain-top, to call on God. The first music was the breathing of devotion; the first hymns were confessions of faith; the first buildings were temples. However perverted, beclouded, or unholy man's conceptions of God became, the grand idea was never entirely extinguished; the existence of God, in some way, has been owned in every age; and when in individual instances it has been denied, this was regarded by the majority as the last perversion of intellect, and the most artificial effect of sin. Even a pagan orator has said—"We must abandon our humanity to deny a divinity; and he who shall say there is no God, proclaims himself to be no man."

What is meant, then, is not that these oracles

discover the existence of a God; but that they reveal His perfections, and teach the necessity of faith in Him as He is thus revealed. We want to know not only that "*He is*," but that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." We want a revelation of His heart.

"I beseech thee, show me thy glory," said Moses, as if the spokesman for mankind.

* * * * * *

"And the Lord descended in a cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty." Such, in substance, is the whole of the inspired testimony respecting the ineffable Name; and faith in this name is a first principle. But what is this faith? Faith is best understood, not by definitions, but by effects. To have "faith towards God," then, is to feel as Moses felt, when, while standing in the cleft of the rock, this stately procession of thought first flamed and glided across his awe-struck soul: it is to feel able to say, "I think, I will, I speak, I act as I do, *because* I have faith towards God;" it is to feel His Spirit touch us,

to have the most affecting sense of His society, to act as under His inspection, to be alive to His presence as the most intense of all realities, giving the zest to every pleasure, the light to every beauty, the soul to every scene; to trust Him for the food, and raiment, and home, both of our mortal and immortal nature; to make Him the confidant of every weakness, and want, and woe; to revive beneath the sun-burst of His smile, and to mourn at the hiding of His face.

The reality of this faith is one thing—the degree is another; but, according to the degree of its existence, will be these signs of its operation; and faith thus founded, and thus displayed, always has been, and always will be, a first principle of the holy oracles, as it is of the salvation which they reveal.

But, thirdly, we shall never have faith towards God, or approach Him in the way that has been just described, until our infected spirits have applied to a fountain of cleansing. So another essential principle is "*the doctrine of baptisms.*" The word baptism is now exclusively employed to express the initiatory rite of Christianity, but here it is evidently used in its modal sense alone; and the writer appears to have in view what in another place, and using the same original word, he describes as "divers washings." His allusion is obviously to the baptisms which those services of

ceremonial purification implied, and which were necessary in order to their performance. Some, whose judgments are entitled to the most deferential respect, will doubtless be of opinion that the word, as it is used in the present instance, is intended to include *all* the applications of water prescribed in the Hebrew ritual, partial as well as entire; while others, on philological grounds, will feel shut up to the conviction that the latter alone are intended. It will not be needful to enter upon this inquiry now; as whatever our decisions may be upon it, they could not essentially affect our present argument, which is this:—these baptisms all had a *doctrine*—and the doctrine they taught was the pollution of man's spirit, and the cleansing efficacy of the Saviour's death.

If the sons of Aaron, before they were invested with the priestly garments, or entered upon the functions of their sacred office, plunged in ceremonial waters; if the proselyte from heathenism, before he took his station amongst the Temple worshippers, or was naturalised amongst the holy tribes, always did the same; if the Israelite who had contracted legal impurity from the stroke of leprosy, the touch of death, or from contact with any other unhallowed thing, always did the same; if on the occasion for the performance of those ceremonies which sealed the recovered leper's

right to be received into society again, the priest dipped the mystic dove in water, then flung it up into the air, to soar away on glistening wing to the rocky covert or the shady grove, symbol of the ransomed spirit in its flight to heaven; if these and other baptisms were administered under the Mosaic economy, all these baptisms held a doctrine; and the first part of the doctrine they taught was, that our nature, and the whole of our nature, needs cleansing, to fit it for the presence of God. The ceremonial defilements which they removed, told of a defilement more venomous and repulsive still—that defilement which stains and darkens the soul; that defilement which stops not at the surface of man's nature, but searches to the core—that moral poison, which, deep, central, and diffusive, visits every fibre, spreads through every power, and touches with its virus all the faculties of life, from the stateliest intellectual attribute to the meanest instinct of the senses. On this principle, those baptisms, and the defilements they removed, were always interpreted by the spiritual man; for instance:—

Haggai said, "If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these (that is, the things of the Temple service), shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people,

and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer is unclean."*

Brethren, if our *spirits* daily touch "the body of this death;" if our *spirits* burn with leprosy; if we always dwell in a secret world of souls, each one of which is infected like our own—shall we be unclean? There can be but one reply. Like the leper of old, seen by the congregation clad in the garments of the grave, and making his gesture of entreaty from afar, only with keener sorrow and with deeper shame it becomes us to cry, "Unclean, unclean!"

"The doctrine of baptisms," however, was not merely that man is vile, but that God is merciful. Those baptisms told not only of sin, but of a fountain opened for sin; and we know where that precious fountain flows. Looking to the dying Saviour, "the dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day." It was opened on Calvary, and from that hour to the present, baptism *there*—the baptism of the soul—has been the only essential baptism, the only act by which, through the eternal Spirit, the penalties of sin are all remitted, and all its pollutions finally cleansed away. Rejoice to think that it is a fountain, and not a scanty and precarious supply. It is not as the water of a

* Haggai ii. 13, 14.

vessel, that must have measurable limits; it is not as the water of the shallow lakelet or the summer stream, soon dried by the sunshine, or sealed by the frost; it is not as the water melting from the mountain snow, which shakes in springing spray from rock to rock, to vanish in a season with the heat that called it forth; but it is the water of a *fountain*,—sufficient for each, and sufficient for all, always flowing, yet always full. It flows and flows, and will for ever flow, while a single sinner lives to need it; and this perennial fountain always has been, as it always will be, the sinner's one resource. The worshipper under the law, though he might but imperfectly know it, was cleansed from his sins by the power of that atoning death alone; and the doctrine of baptisms, taught by the oracles of God, was one of the principles of "the doctrine of Christ."

But, fourthly, the doctrine, or the true meaning of the *laying on of hands*, was another principle of the doctrine of Christ. It was prescribed in the old Hebrew service-book that when a person brought his sacrifice to the altar, he should lay his hand upon its head, and lean upon it with all his weight. While thus standing, with his hand laid upon the victim, and his face directed to the Temple, he repeated this formula: "O Lord, I have sinned, I have done perversely: I have done

thus and thus" (here naming, either mentally or audibly, the specific sins of which he had recently been guilty, and for which he now sought pardon), "I have done thus, and thus, but I return by repentance to thee, and let this be my expiation." If several persons united in one presentation, each one in succession placed his hand upon the victim, and in turn offered this prayer. On the great day of atonement, the high priest did the same thing, in the name of all the people whom he officially represented. He placed both his hands upon the various victims that were to be offered in sacrifice, and more especially upon the "Azazel," the mystical goat, which, as if bearing the sins which had been confessed over it, was then led away from the crowd of watchers, past the last dwelling, past the last tree, until both goat and leader disappeared in the glow of the great white wilderness, that lay like the land of the curse beyond.

This laying on of hands, like what has just been mentioned, was not a mere ceremony, but a sermon. It conveyed a *doctrine*, and the doctrine was, that he who would be saved must, by his own personal act and deed, appropriate the work of Him who is our Saviour, by being our substitute. The child is not saved by the faith of his father; nor the church-member by ceremonial relation to the church. He must mourn apart, he must come

alone, he must trust for himself, and not trust in the trust of another. There must be a spiritual act answering to this material sign. As the Israelite placed his hand upon the head of his offering, each one of you, as he goes to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world," must say, "My *soul* would lay her hand upon this sacred head; my *soul* would lean with all her weight on Jesus." As if no other sinner lived, as if trembling in the very focus of Divine attentions, "Here I stand, a burdened penitent, and with a melting, broken heart, I confess my sin, and transfer my burden to Him, who alone has authority to bear it away into the land of forgetfulness." This doctrine of Christ has, from the very beginning, been a "first principle of the oracles of God."

The *resurrection of the dead* is another essential article of faith, and one, like the rest, peculiar to inspired revelation. Nature does not teach it. It never dawned on the proud thoughts of philosophy. Its bright irradiations never cheered the soul of classic sage or heathen mourner, as the one mused on the secrets of the silent land, or the other bound the funeral garland around the dead man's brow. Even those beautiful mysteries of the spring, which are sometimes thought to teach, inferentially, the doctrine of a resurrection, convey

no teaching sufficiently defined to still the agonies of doubt or sorrow. The flower shooting from the seed, the insect breaking from the chrysalis, to waver on wings of light in an ethereal element it never knew before—are not facts to make known a resurrection, but only images to express it when already known; for that seed was not dead, it only seemed to die; that chrysalis was not dead, it did but shroud in the likeness of death the latent mystery of life. The changes they witness and the charms they show, are revivals, not resurrections; and if the word "resurrection" be written in the "living epistles" of nature, it is written so mysteriously, that he must be himself a prophet who can read a text so doubtful, or interpret a prediction so obscure.

But in the oracles of God, all the great problems that affect the destiny of man receive a full solution, and all the questions that come from his breaking heart meet with a distinct response. Before the law was given, even before the nation of Israel was in existence, an inspired saint, speaking of his own sleep in the grave, was overheard to say to his God, "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." As time ran on, the testimony grew clearer and clearer, until it brightened into the clearest effulgence of the day. And all along this was as much

a doctrine of Christ as a truth of revelation. Ages before the advent, this sentence fell from the oracle: listen! "Thy dead men shall live; *together with my dead body*, shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs; and the earth shall cast out the dead." Surely we know that voice! It is not the voice of a stranger; it is not the voice of an undefined and unknown Deity. It is the very voice which we have so often heard grandly sounding over the graves, and cheering our hearts with the words, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The resurrection of the dead is a "doctrine of Christ."

The Emperor Theodosius having, on a great occasion, opened all the prisons and released his prisoners, is reported to have said: "And now, would to God I could open all the tombs and give life to the dead!" But there is no limit to the mighty power and royal grace of Jesus. He opens the prisons of justice and the prisons of death with equal and infinite ease: He redeems not the soul only but the body. From the hour of the "laying on of hands," the entire man has been saved. The whole being, material and immaterial, has been delivered from the fate that awaits this "City of Destruction." Even the bones of Joseph must

not be left in Egypt, for they belong to Canaan. Not a single particle that enters into the essence of our nature will be lost: whatever powers may threaten us, our very dust will be victorious over them all; and at the last, before the transfiguring glance of Him who sits upon the throne, shall start into life and be changed into glory.

But, once more: *the eternal judgment* has ever been a primary article of revelation. Though analogy, intuition, and universal opinion may have furnished grounds to justify belief in it as a probable event, only the "oracles of God" could unfold its principles, or announce its absolute certainty. This they have ever done. Through Enoch's venerable sayings, through David's solemn songs, through Paul's burning periods and John's dread symbols, through all the organs of inspiration from first to last, they have ever declared that a meeting is decreed between God and every man for a judgment—a judgment whose allotments shall be perfect, and whose decisions final. The servants of God, amidst the sorrowful confusions of their earthly lot, have ever appealed from their unjust judges to Him who shall appear on the "great white throne;" and that throne we have at last been told, though our fathers knew it not, will be the "judgment-seat of Christ." He, through whose sacrifice our souls have received a "baptism,"—

He who has become our substitute by "the laying on of hands," bearing all the pressure of our responsibility, and binding Himself to be answerable for us at the judgment-day,—will be Himself our Judge. When the cloud parts through which breaks the brightness of His presence, we shall say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him!" For us the "eternal judgment" can have but one issue, and that will be "eternal life."

But there are some of you who have no right to these anticipations. You have not made provision for the great hereafter. By that tremendous phrase, "*eternal* judgment," consider your ways and be wise! If its true meaning could lighten upon you at this moment, what consternation would strike upon each spirit! Every man, though serene as death before, would spring to his feet, and cry, "Tell me, tell me, this moment, what I must do!"

Inquirer! The call to repentance is still sounding, the way to God is still open. The fountain has not yet been sealed. The Surety still waits for you to "lay your hand" upon Him;—but this calm hour may be the crisis of your infinite history —take heed that you confound not the crisis with the catastrophe. Judgment will only ratify for ever your present choice, and make your decision for Christ, or your decision against Him, "eternal."

These, brethren, are the foundation-truths in which all Christians glory: "Repentance from dead works; faith towards God; the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands; resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." They are called "first principles," because they are starting-points, not standing-points, our first and simplest lessons; they are called first principles of the "oracles of God," because they are what the oracles of God have always taught; they are called "the doctrine of Christ," because Christ is the substance of them all, and to Him alone they owe their meaning, their beauty, and their very existence; they are called "the foundation," because while some of our sentiments may be only subsidiary, and others only decorative, these are fundamental; not one of them can be spared, and on them all combined we build our Christian life; built upon them, we are "built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone."

II. And now, passing from the doctrinal statement, let us give attention to the practical appeal. Each word is alive, and seems to claim separate and successive study.

1. "*Not laying again* the foundation." The teacher, in this phrase, at once indicates the course

he intends to adopt in his own instructions, and the conduct he would prescribe to those who study them. "Not laying again the foundation." God will not lay it again in His purposes; you are not to be for ever laying it again in your mind and memory; as it is settled in the heavens, so let it be settled here. "Not laying again the foundation." You are not to forget it, so as to have to learn it again; you are not to doubt it, so as to need to be convinced of it again; you are not to forsake it, so as to have to return to it again. "Not laying again the foundation." You are not to be like an insane or unskilful builder, who excavates the foundation of his work, tears it from its place, and takes it to pieces, being doubtful of its materials, or uncertain of its sufficiency to sustain the superincumbent weight; and who, always engaged in destroying the foundation, and laying it again, makes no progress with his building. Take the word of an apostle, this is the only *right* foundation. And "sure as Tabor is amongst the mountains and Carmel by the sea;" sure as heaven is glorious and God is true, this is the only *sure* foundation. It is one of the eternal certainties; it will bear the weight of worlds; the pillars of earth may be shaken, and the stars of heaven may fall, but this "abideth for ever." Builders for eternity, what are you doing? Men who have

only an hour to live, why sport with life and death, like children with their toys? The time is short! The grand engagement of life is not to lay this foundation, but to build upon it. You ought to have done it before now. Away with your speculations and hesitancies, those most weak and pitiful frustrators of a mighty work. Henceforth build upon your foundation, not laying it again, for "the day is far spent, and the night cometh when no man can work."

2. "*Leaving* the principles of the doctrine of Christ." At first sight, the meaning of this charge is not obvious, and it seems to clash with those connected with it. There are different ways of leaving an object. We may leave it as the spendthrift son leaves his father's house, never to return; we may leave it as the deserter leaves the shield which he has "vilely cast away;" we may leave it as education and refinement leave ignorance and rusticity; but not so are we to leave these first principles of our faith.

Some indeed there are, who, regarding themselves as initiated into the true mysteries of Christianity, would argue in favour of a literal abandonment of its doctrines, as only forming what is called the "old theology." They were useful in their day, they will tell you, but they have done their work; and the essence of religion lies not in its

dogmas, but in its living spirit. Therefore, in an age so advanced, so refined, and so eagerly mental as the present, we can dispense with those fixed creeds, which in a ruder period doubtless did good service—now leaving them, as Æneas left his crutches, when he could walk alone.

But no; those great principles by which God saves the soul, like the great principles by which He rules matter, are the same from age to age. Their very perfection lies in their unchangeableness. Certain as that the axioms of mathematics, the principles of mechanical force, the laws of chemical affinity, and those laws which make the stone fall to the earth, or the river flow to the sea, can never be dispensed with or repealed for the sake of any demands arising out of the "march of intellect;" so certain is it that the "first principles of the oracles of God" will never be changed for a similar necessity. The latter, like the former, are always the same; yet such is their perfect adaptation to the wants of each particular age, that they might have been appointed for *that particular age alone.* What they call the dogmas of Christianity, are in fact only these principles, in the only form in which they can be expressed to man.

If we leave them, therefore, we must in some way *leave* them, and yet *not* leave them. We are to leave them as the scholar leaves the letters of

the alphabet—leaving them only to *use* them; leaving them that he may bring out all their powers, and employ them in startling combinations, as the instrument for acquiring or diffusing thought. We are to leave them as the plant leaves its root, when it towers into a majestic tree, leaving it only that it may the more depend upon it; and, day by day, drawing from it those fresh supplies of vital sap which it pours into the fresh leaves, fresh boughs,—ever fresh and ever beautiful formations of that life which refreshes the hungry with its clusters, or the weary with its shade. We are to leave them as the builder leaves his foundation that he may carry up the building, stone above stone, story above story, tower above tower, from the dusky basement to the sun-lit pinnacle; always leaving the foundation, yet always on it, and on it with the most massive pressure, and the most complete dependance, when most he leaves it.

3. "Let us go on unto perfection." It is obvious that there can be no reference, in this word "perfection," to the justifying work of Christ on our behalf. That is perfect from the first moment we believe. At once we receive perfect forgiveness, and a perfect title to the "inheritance in light." But, although justification is complete, sanctification has yet to be carried on. To borrow the idea of a transatlantic writer:—"A perfect title to a

piece of property puts a man in possession of it just as absolutely on the first day when it is given, as twenty years after. When a man gives a flower, it is a perfect gift; but the gift of grace is rather the gift of a flower *seed*." It contains within it all the Divine germs necessary for growth. And we are asked to cherish it, that it may go on unto perfection, as the seed goes on to the perfection of a full-blown flower. The "principles of the doctrine of Christ" are the only elements on which this perfection can be fed—the only foundation-stones on which (to use a favourite expression of the New Testament writers) we can be *edified*—no other can sustain the glorious *edifice* which we call perfection. What is perfection? All images like those just now employed are in danger, even while they help us, of suggesting some false idea. Borrowed of necessity from the physical world, they all place something before our minds which has a limit; but we must forget limits when we think of Christian perfection, for godliness knows no finality. God is the only absolute perfection; and going on to perfection is going on to God. It is to be more Christ-like, to have more of His love, more of His patience, more and more of His spirit of sacrifice; it is to have richer and riper experience continually; it is to make higher and higher attainments, to have deeper and deeper humility; it is to look

upon God with affections that grow as they gaze, and see more of God as they grow; it is to have increasing transformation from the light of a closer and yet closer presence; and where, where is this perfection to stop? It is a path opening into infinity; a life for ever going on from wise to wiser, from strong to stronger, from holy to holier, and higher perfection being ever still before it. "Our perfection for eternity," says one, "may be our progress for eternity." In a well-known description of heaven, contained in the Book of Revelation, it is set before us under the conception of a pilgrimage; though, in beautiful contrast to the pilgrimages of earth, it will be through a land where there will be no hunger, no sun-stroke, no mirage, no waterless waste; but as the pilgrims travel on, "the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

4. The word employed to indicate the manner of arriving at this end is richly significant. "Let *us go on* to perfection," should rather be rendered, "let us be *carried on*." "The word is emphatical, intimating such a kind of progress as a ship makes when it is under sail. 'Let us be carried on' with the full bent of our minds and affections, with the utmost endeavours of our whole souls.

We have abode long enough by the shore; let us now hoist our sails, and launch into the deep."*

Perhaps we feel discouraged by the labour, and alarmed by the very glory of our calling. The one may seem too much for us to exercise, and the other too great for us to hope for. Almost despairing of our ability to go forward, we may even now be thinking of going back. But if we are unable to *go on*, we are surely able to be *carried* on to perfection. And the Eternal Almightiness is even now at our side. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities." He is ready to heighten our life, to quicken our faith, and as we expand our souls to catch His gracious influences, He will bear us irresistibly along, and then "he that is feeble among us shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God." Pray for the abundant grace of that Spirit, without which you can do nothing, with which you can do all things. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh within you, to will and to do, at His good pleasure."

"And this will we do, if God permit." And will not God permit? Who can doubt it? Our Consoler not permit our consolation! Our Teacher not permit our instruction! Our Saviour not permit our complete salvation!

* Dr. John Owen.

The work is waiting for your consent, not for His. His hand is already stretched out; it is yours only that is kept back. The pause in the process of advancement is not made by Him, but by your own fluttering uncertainty of thought. He is ready,—do you be also ready. You are not straitened in Him,—see to it that you are not straitened in yourselves. In this hour of softened feeling and deepened thought, when you are receiving a fresh visitation from His Spirit, accept His proffered aid, take your resolution to begin a life of noble action and of high ascent, and "labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in you mightily," to "quit yourselves like men;" thus, "leaving first principles, go on unto perfection."

The Apostles' Doctrine.

"Though rich the world in things invisible,
In heathen gods, and spirits great and small,
And bright and dark, the soul did ever dwell
Alone, for One was wanting 'mid them all;
One having might and glory, rich in love,
God, who as man could shame and weakness prove.

"Then came the Word, and took on Him our flesh,
And dwelt with men, here in the world of sight,
And made an end of strife, and linked afresh
Our sinful earth unto the throne of light.
Into His ancient glory he is gone,
And yet He dwells with us till time be done."

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." —1 JOHN i. 1, 2, 3.

IT is an interesting fact, that the very mistakes and imperfections of the primitive churches have been to us the sources of unspeakable advantage. Principally to refute existing errors—errors in principle, leading to errors in practice—the apostles gave out those beautiful and abundant expositions of Christian doctrine and Christian duty, which make the glory of the epistolary

Scriptures. For instance, the error of the Romans, many of whom clung to the idea that justification might at least be partially effected by the works of the preceptive law, called forth that epistle whose central announcement is the doctrine of justification by faith. The errors of the Galatians, who were inclined to mix reliance on Christ with reliance on the works of the ritual law, called forth that epistle, which mainly aims to show that in the Christian dispensation rites convey no secret efficacy, have no essential place, and contribute nothing, however indirectly, to the salvation of the spirit—that being, from first to last, the work of Christ alone. The errors of the Colossians called forth the epistle to the Colossians, with its grand proclamations of Christ's Divinity; and the errors which began to prevail at a later period—the errors of those who thought that Christ, though God, was not truly man—led the last surviving apostle to take the pen into his trembling fingers, and in his extreme old age to write this epistle, with the primary design of declaring Christ's true humanity. Thus we see how, under the reign of omnipotent love, error itself is made to elicit truth, Satan to serve Christ, and the evils of a day to work out forms of good that shall brighten and unfold for ever.

In this opening sentence, the writer states with

condensed brevity the main object of his epistle. His object was to make a certain declaration respecting Christ, with a view to a certain specific purpose. This two-fold object is now to be our study.

I. THE DECLARATION RESPECTING CHRIST. There can be no doubt that it has respect to Christ, and to Christ only. True, he employs a word of the neuter gender to define his theme—a word which we should usually apply to a quality, rather than to a person; and instead of saying, "*He who* was," he says, "*That which* was from the beginning . . . . declare we unto you." But he evidently means, "That uncreated, essential excellence which is now, and has been from the beginning, the theme of our ministry;" and the neuter form of the word is adopted only on the principle which ruled its use by Christ Himself when he said to the Jews, "I and my Father are one"—one perfection, one essence, one life.* Now if we search for the meaning of this sentence, we shall find that the evangelist declares—

1. *The Eternal Existence of Christ.* In the words directly under notice, he says, He is "that *eternal* life;" and when at the close of his appeal he writes the name of Jesus, he adds the assertion,

* Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἕν ἐσμεν.—John x. 30.

"This is the true God and eternal life." Pause for a moment and try to take in the meaning of the wonderful word, Eternal! You are unable to do it. We can explain nothing which lies beyond the horizon of our little and limited life. To us, that which is infinite, never can be definite. That, respecting which we have no more questions to ask, that which our faculties can measure, and our words express, that which does not hush and awe the soul with the thrills of mystery, cannot be eternal. We speak of eternity as something which has no beginning and no end; but when thus we seem to have defined it, we find that we cannot comprehend our own definition, or at least that we have not so much defined what eternity *is*, as what it *is not*. After an inspired herald has cried, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," and we try to comprehend this proclamation, thought faints, imagination droops its weary wing, and we resign the effort in despair. "I may bring," says one, "the discovery of astronomical science to my aid; I can imagine that each of the countless stars that stud the arch of night was formed in succession, and that myriads of ages elapsed between the formation of each; but if my mind could span the sum of all these myriads, could dart back a thought to the moment when the first star beamed on the

regions of space, I should feel that I had only reached the starting-point for the preceding eternity; for I should feel that that star of which I had caught a glimpse, could only be regarded as the first lamp that was lighted up to guide my way back to His dread abode; and if the question were asked, where dwelt the Deity before that?—the reply must still be the same: "He inhabited eternity." * Although we have gone so far, far back in thought, we have made no approach whatever to the understanding of the word Eternity, considered simply in its application to all the past, but its meaning reaches equally through all the future—

> "Eternity, Eternity!
> How long art thou, Eternity!
> A circle infinite art thou,
> Thy centre an Eternal Now.
> Never, we name thy outer bond,
> For never end therein is found.
> Ponder, O man, Eternity!" †

Mysterious as is the word Eternity, this one thing is clear,—He who is Eternal, must be Divine. He who is "before all things," must be the cause of all things; and creation, however wide in range or rich in splendour, must be less by infinity than its author.

Slow indeed must be that faith, and dead that

* Dr. Harris's Pre-adamite Earth. † Wülffer.

spirit, which having seen thus far the revelation of Christ's Eternity, will not cry aloud, "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ." "Thou art worthy to receive glory and honour and power," for Thou art "the Father of the everlasting age." * "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, *from everlasting* to *everlasting* thou art God!"

2. The evangelist declares that Jesus assumed *human nature*. The Eternal took a mortal form, became subject to the laws of time, and the prophetic word, "Immanuel, God with us," received its full accomplishment. The earliest sceptics in the church never doubted that Jesus was Divine. That was stated in words so refulgent, and confirmed by proofs so convincing, that they at least felt that the denial of His Divinity would involve the denial of Divine inspiration. Denied it was not then, and denied it never would be now, but for the speculative difficulties and apparent contradictions involved in its belief. To them, the only unknown term in the Saviour's nature was the human, and that alone seemed to them incapable of clear evidence and certain affirmation. They tried to think that He was human in appearance only, that what was called "the man Jesus Christ" was only a form created by the hand of Omnipo-

* Isaiah ix. 6; Lowth's translation.

tence to imitate the faculties and actions of a man; that the image impressed upon the optic nerve eluded the more stubborn evidence of the touch, and that the disciples enjoyed the spiritual, but not the corporeal presence of the Son of God. "The rage of the Jews was idly wasted against an impassive phantom, and the mystic scenes of the passion and death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, were represented on the theatre of Jerusalem for the benefit of mankind."*

But is was no mere "likeness of the appearance of a man," like that which Ezekiel saw; no unsubstantial shape; no vision touching the earth for a time, sometimes floating into sight, sometimes sinking into shade, on which the apostles lavished their affections, and for which they gave their lives. The pastor at Ephesus put forth all his powers of thought and love to check this most injurious speculation, and to show its strange absurdity. We can imagine the old man, "leaning upon the top of his staff," amidst a circle of these doubters, giving forth, with looks and tones of unwonted animation, his recollections of the Saviour's mortal story, and his witness to the reality of His human life. "Little children," he might have said, "you think my faculties have deceived me; but though they are failing now, they were vigorous once. In

* Gibbon on the Docetæ.

the prime of my strength I could 'outrun Peter;' though you can scarcely hear me now, I was called 'a Son of Thunder' then; these eyes, so dim to-day, were then so keen, that once, after a night upon the lake, I pointed to a figure on the shore, faintly seen in the mist of distance, and the ghostly twilight of the morning, and said, 'It is the Lord!' before the eyes of my companions could distinguish Him. In those days, when these grey locks were bright with youth, my head sometimes rested on His breast; hour after hour, I saw His face—I saw the tears upon it; I felt the warm clasp of His hand, I heard His voice, I seem to hear it sounding still. Well do I remember, ah, how can I forget! that one day after 'the Beauty of Israel had been slain upon the high places,' and we almost thought that we should see His face no more, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of us, and said, 'Peace be unto you.' But we were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that we had seen a spirit; and He said to us, 'Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.' O ye of little faith, be assured that we have not followed cunningly-devised fables! That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, which

our hands have handled of the Word of Life . . . . that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you."

Such seems to be the spirit and train of his thought in the present declaration; and it is not only the affidavit of a witness, but the sentence of an oracle, for he who gave it was inspired. The mystery which it involves is no argument against its truth. You are unable to explain the wonderful union of God and man in the nature of Christ; but are you more perfectly able to explain the wonderful union of matter and spirit in your own? Are you able to explain how it is that matter seems to be affected by the laws of spirit, so that the hands beckon, the feet walk, and the lips have language in obedience to the determinations of the intellect and will? or how it is that spirit seems to be affected by the laws of matter, so that an afflicted body will sometimes make a clouded soul? In both cases you must believe, not on the ground of your ability to explain the thing in question, but on the ground of its support by appropriate evidence. The evidence of an inspired witness has now been given to the fact that He who was with God and was God, was with man and was man. There it stands on the pages of the record, in unquestionable truth and unconquerable power. It is enough for us that it is there. Wavering

disciple, "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." "Then," says Chrysostom, "when thou thinkest of Christ, do not think of Him as God only, or as man only, but as God and man together; for I know that Christ was hungry, and I know that Christ with five loaves fed five thousand men. I know that Christ was thirsty, and I know that Christ turned the water into wine. I know that Christ was carried in a ship, and I know that Christ walked upon the waves. I I know that Christ died, and I know that Christ raised the dead. I know that Christ was set before Pilate, and I know that Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father. I know that Christ was stoned by the Jews, and I know that Christ is worshipped by all the holy angels. I know that Christ is God; and I know, great is the mystery of godliness! that Christ is God manifest in the flesh."

3. The evangelist further declares that Jesus is *the Word.* What do we understand by that epithet?—what are *words?* A poet answers:—

> "Those mystic symbols that can still retain
> The phantom forms that flit across the brain;
> O'er unsubstantial thought hold strong control,
> And fix the essence of the immortal soul."

But to be still more definite, words are signs of thought; words are instruments of expression; our ideas, reasonings, and plans are locked in

secrecy and silence before we clothe them in language, and thoughts unuttered are unknown. My thoughts at this moment are secrets to you until I utter them in words. What words are to thought, Christ is to God. *He utters God;* and of every imaginable manifestation of God, He is the manifestor. Let us try to test the accuracy of this statement.

Look, for instance, at *nature.* Go out amidst its myriad forms and voices, its breathing mysteries, and dead memorials of ancient life. Go to the gay field, the solemn desert, or the sounding shore. Go to the green lanes of England, the gorgeous flora of the Brazilian forest, or the glittering icebergs within the arctic circle. Go, when earth is covered with the snows of winter, the blooms of spring, or the rich and melancholy magnificence of the dying year. Go, with open eye, and open ear, and open heart; and, wherever you go, you will find it impossible to gaze upon this creation without feeling that there is a spirit at work within, striving to express itself to man, that you are everywhere in the presence of a teacher whose doctrine "drops as the rain, and distils as the dew;" and who utters ceaseless speech of God.

"Yes," replies some religionist, "this is precisely what I say. The universe *is* a revelation of God,—a revelation, fresh, simple, and direct, from

the Great Spirit. Here are no doubtful texts, no interpolated passages, no obscuring inventions of the Pharisee or priest. Quit your Sabbatarian congregations, leave the religion of the church and chapel, and come out with me into the free, bright, breezy air; listen to the preaching of the woods, read the page of life, and worship in the fragrant shrine of nature. You talk to me of Christ, but here, at least, we can acquire a knowledge of God without Him." Wait a little, we reply again, before you come to this conclusion. Who is the Revealer of all this glory? The Bible, which you have never been able to disprove, and which even you acknowledge to be Divine, tells us that this Revealer is Christ. "In the *beginning* was the Word." Before earth's first morning dawned, before man's first song of adoration rang, before the first rock rose in the waste, or the first leviathan tempested the deep, or the first tree flung its shadow along the solitary plain,—He was in existence; for He must have been in the beginning to make a beginning, and to "shed forth this which ye now see and hear." *His* voice first said, "Let there be light;" *His* touch first woke from the harp of nature its wild and wonderful music; *His* fingers first shot along in their lines those stars, which, rushing through immensity, are ever proclaiming, as they fly, the glory of the Lord;

His hand first shattered the mountain peak, shook in falling folds the waters of the cataract, and poured abroad "the green abounding beauty of the sea." And still He is present in every place, "upholding all things by the word of His power." As of old, He walks on the wings of the wind and the waves of the deep, gives laws to the storm, bids the frost shoot its fibres and the fire its light, and rules over things infinitely little, as well as things infinitely great.

"One Spirit, His who wore the platted thorn with bleeding brow,
Rules universal nature. Not a flower
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
Of His unrivalled pencil."

It is *Christ* who is ever speaking here; *Christ* is Alpha and Omega, first and last; here and everywhere, "*Christ* is all, and in all." For "He is before all things, all things were made by Him, and by Him all things consist."

But He has given us a more advanced revelation than this. Nature shows the Divine perfections, but we may still doubt if it proves the Divine *personality*. The personal man yearns for the knowledge of a personal God. When my heart is breaking, sorrow cannot sob itself to rest on the bosom of immensity. When my steps are sliding, I cannot grasp the hand of the Infinite Unknown.

When I am weary with the burden of some dead secret, I cannot confide it to an empty abstraction, or an Impersonal Idea. When I am dying, I need God to be near me; I want to feel His touch and to know His love, as the Good Shepherd whose rod and staff can comfort me, and whose smile can light up the valley of the shadow of death.

I say in vain, amidst the scenes of nature, "Dread, beautiful mystery, what is thy name?—where art thou?—what art thou? Oh, that I knew where I could find thee, and I would come even to thy seat, and order my cause before thee!" This discovery unassisted humanity could never make—"The world by wisdom knew not God." One of the ancient names it applied to Deity was, "The Unutterable." At Athens it reared an altar with this inscription, "To the unknown God." Over the portals of a temple in Egypt, to proclaim the sacred presence within, it wrote the words, "I am that which was, which is, and which shall be, and no mortal hath ever lifted my veil." Age after age rose the ceaseless cry of man, "for God, for the living God." Christ heard that cry; and, as if stirred with mysterious emotion, and impatient of delay, His spirit rushed forward to embrace the opportunity of satisfying the deep, universal yearning of the human heart, with reverence be it said, as if in a hurry and agitation of love: "Lo, I come,

I come!" cried He, "in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God . . . a body hast thou prepared me." In the earliest times He shadowed out the Divine personality by His appearances as the Angel of the Presence; and when the fulness of time arrived, He came forth from the depths of mystery, broke the silence of ages, and in Him, at last, "The Unutterable" found utterance. He was the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person, and His embodied life was the Word to utter all that can be known of that life which is Infinite and Divine. "For the Word was made flesh, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

But Christ has given a yet more advanced revelation than this. He has uttered the *Divine love to sinners.* It was a great thing to "show us the Father," and to bring the infinite Being within the limits of our conceptions, yet so as to compel the constant recollection of His infinity. It was a great thing to make us feel that the relation of God to man is like that of a person to a person; to show that it is possible for a mortal to know Him as a friend knows his friend; it was a great thing thus to reveal Him as an object not for our reverence only, but for our love, and a final resting-place for "thoughts that wander through eternity."

But, great as this discovery is, we sigh for a discovery yet more complete. We are sinful beings, and we want a knowledge of God suited to our sinful state. We now know that He is conceivable, but is He approachable? He may love the pure angels in glory, but will He love sinners like ourselves? Great God! conscience threatens us; the law threatens us; death threatens us, and we deserve it all. "Art thou with us, or with our adversaries?" The Cross furnishes the reply. There, the fulness of infinite forgiveness finds vehement, exuberant expression. Poor, guilty, stricken trembler, look to that Cross! There, there! All *that* was in the heart of God, but it was never said out till now! Many times have you heard the words, "God is love;" many times have you thought that surely they conveyed the most beautiful definition of Deity that ever fell on human ear, but you never fully knew what they meant before!

As Jesus is the mediatorial instrument of all revelation, and the utterer of all we know of God —all we know from His works, all we know through an incarnate life, and all we know through an atonement; as all these inspired commentaries on these great facts were written by holy men, who only recorded what the "Spirit of Christ within them did testify," Jesus alone can wear the

title which the Divine evangelist so delighted to proclaim. "He is the Word;" he might have said, and practically did say, "what the Divine mysteries of His nature may be, it is not in my province to reveal, or in yours to comprehend, but this I declare unto you—He is the Word. 'I saw heaven opened, and beheld a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called faithful and true; and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written that *no man knew but He Himself;* and He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and His name is called THE WORD OF GOD.'"*

4. The evangelist also declares that Jesus is our *Life.* Twice, in the course of these few sentences, is He thus announced. He is the "Eternal Life." He is the "Word of Life." Life is ascribed to Him in a high and singular sense. We only live; He is Life. We live by permission; but the "Son hath life in Himself." "The *first* man, Adam, was made a living soul: the last Adam is a quickening spirit." And perhaps Christ is here mentioned as the Life, principally to convey the idea that He is the sole giver of life to us, quickening "whom He will." As the Word, He is the *revealer* of what we need; as the Life, He is the

* Revelation xix. 11–13.

communicator of what we need. As the Word, He is God uttering Himself; as the Life, He is God giving Himself. As the Word, He is God *without* us; as the Life, He is God *within* us. Having offered the great atonement, and thus done all that was needful, in order that law might have a compensation to accept, and love a forgiveness to bestow, He offers life to all who believe. He finds us dead in the sight of law. Beings thus sentenced can claim no right, exercise no civil function, perform no legal act; and though as yet only trembling in the grasp of death, the law regards them as already dead. "I am come," says the Saviour, "that you might have life." "Look to me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." In the moment we look to Him in penitence and faith, our sentence is reversed, and the promise is fulfilled which declares that "He who believeth on the Son hath life." The life which He spares He renovates, for to the gift of a free pardon He adds the gift of the Spirit. That Spirit is life. Henceforth we have a life that can trust, a life that can love, a life that can burn with the beauties of holiness, a life that can work for God on earth, and worship Him in heaven; and although the body must die, that dissolution which nature regards with such a deep instinctive terror, does not in reality break the continuity of our

highest life: it is only an event in our history, a change we must suffer, a line we must cross on our way to a nobler existence. You are searching for the great secret—you who, like the alchemists of the Gothic ages, have been trying through many a long year, and by many a weary experiment, to discover the true elixir of life—come to Jesus; He alone can offer to your souls the cup of eternal youth. Drink of the water of life that He gives, and you will never die. Time will die, earth will die, sorrow will die, death will die; but he who believes in Jesus shall never, never die.

The Apostles' Fellowship.

"No distance breaks the tie of blood:
Brothers are brothers evermore;
Nor wrath, nor wrong of deadliest mood,
That magic may o'erpower;
Oft, ere the common source be known,
The kindred drops will claim their own,
And throbbing pulses silently
Move heart towards heart by sympathy.

"So is it with true Christian hearts;
Their mutual share in Jesus' blood
An everlasting bond imparts
Of holiest brotherhood:
Oh! might we all our lineage prove,
Give and forgive, do good and love,
By soft endearments in kind strife
Lightening the load of daily life."

"That ye also may have fellowship with us."—1 JOHN i. 3.

WE have now to study the design of the declaration which has lately been considered. It was—

1. That we, by faith in the Saviour who is thus declared, might have fellowship with the apostles *in a Divine Privilege.* "That which was from the beginning . . . . declare we unto you, that ye also might have fellowship with us; *and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus*

Christ." Fellowship with God, therefore, is the privilege into which they had been introduced by faith, and in which they longed for all their companions to participate. There is a sense in which for the creature to have fellowship with the Creator is the one supreme impossibility. The attributes which make the meaning of the word "God," are incommunicable, and the desire to share them—the desire to share the Divine omniscience, and "to be as *Elohim*, knowing good and evil;" *—the desire to wield the Divine omnipotence, to "have an arm like God, and to thunder with a voice like His;"—the desire to rival the Divine supremacy, to be "as God, sitting in the temple of God;"—desire like this is the very insanity of sin, and was the cause of the first fall of a spirit from heaven. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of the morning!" "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, and will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: *I will be like the Most High.*" †

Yet, startling as it is, the phrase employed by John really means participation of the Divine nature—the nature of the Saviour whom he has just declared. The word here used is the very

* Genesis iii. 5. † Isaiah xiv. 12, 13, 14.

same as that employed by Peter (*κοινωνοὶ*), when he tells us that the promises are given us that we may be "partakers of the Divine nature."* Fellowship with God our Saviour, is to share the same celestial life, and to be actuated by the same Holy Spirit; so as to "love *as He* has loved," to "forgive *as He* has forgiven," to "walk in light *as He is* in the light," and in the end to "be perfect *as He* is perfect;" it is, in the sphere of spiritual things, and within the limitations of our finite existence, to see with His insight, and to act with His inspiration. It is to work together with Him, to have fellowship with His sufferings, and to "enter into His joy." "Fellowship" is no trivial word, and it is obviously used here with no secondary and imaginative meaning. It means more than sympathy, more than love, more than intercourse; it means, to have a certain life and light and joy in common with God. All this fellowship flows from living faith; and it is as if the apostle had said, "We believe in Jesus as He has now been set forth; our faith is so wrought and incorporated into our being that we would die rather than doubt; we so completely trust Him, that we are identified with Him for ever, for He said to us, 'Abide in me and I in you.' In His last intercessory prayer, also, His language was,

* 2 Peter i. iv.

'I pray that as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.' We have, therefore, declared Him unto you, that you, through like precious faith, may with us enter into this ineffable fellowship. Spirits, come, touch with us; come, taste with us; see with us, hear with us, handle with us of the Word of Life, that ye also may have fellowship with us."

2. Another object of the declaration was, that we might have fellowship with the apostles in *church communion.* Many efforts have been made to discover the secret of true fellowship; many and various are the terms required by different parties in the Christian church, as essential to communion. One will say, "We declare our forms of worship;" and another, "We declare our denominational standards of belief;" another, "We declare our own interpretations of certain laws of Christ;" and another, "We declare the principles of our ecclesiastical organisation,"—that ye also may have fellowship with us. But we, on the contrary, desiring to follow His inspired rule, would say to men of all sections and shades of Christian faith, "Retain, if you please, your distinctive opinions, retain your ecclesiastical preferences, retain your rites and your creeds, but accept the Saviour, as He was declared to us by lips touched with the fire of God, and you will then

have fellowship with us as our fellow-learners of Divine truth, our fellow-soldiers in the holy war, our fellow-travellers to the celestial city. No mere accordance of thought will create a fellowship of love, no iron externalism will bind together a brotherhood of souls. Our highest ideal of union is not the union of minds in the recognition of a truth, but the union of hearts in the love of a Saviour. If I trust the true Christ of the Scriptures, let any man belong to Christ, and he must belong to me. He may not yet be willing to call me brother, but his brother I am. He may know it, and I may not know it, but he is mine and I am his. "Now, my dear brother," wrote Ridley to Hooper, from the prison at Oxford to the prison in London, "forasmuch as we thoroughly agree and wholly consent together in those things which are the substantial points of our religion, against which the world so furiously rageth in these our days, howsoever, in times past, by certain by-matters and mere circumstances of religion, your wisdom and my simplicity have a little jarred, each of us following the abundance of his own sense and judgment;—now, I say, be assured, that even with my whole heart, God is my witness, in the bowels of Christ, I love you in the truth, and for the truth's sake, which abideth in us, and as I am [redacted]ersuaded shall, by the grace of God, abide in us

for evermore." Sooner or later each must make the same confession to his brother—then why not make it now?

As uniformity is not unity, so, in the evil sense of the term, variety is not variance; and there may be in the church of God, as in His works, variety the most diversified, combined with unity the most divine. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; and one star differeth from another star in glory. The stars differ in size; they differ in colours; they differ in their distance from the source of light. One has belts, another satellites; some move in eccentric, and others in regular orbits; but by virtue of their fellowship with one central sun, they have fellowship one with another; and as all stars revolving round the sun belong to one solar system, all the minds deriving life, light, and impulse from Christ, however varied in other respects, belong to one church. This is the dictum of no mere human authority, the speculation of no vain theorist. An apostle himself has announced it; for, writing, not to the men of his own generation alone, but to all for whom the Bible is intended —that is, to all the human race—he teaches, in terms the most unequivocal, that if we have fellowship with that Saviour whom the apostles declare, we have fellowship with the apostles themselves.

3. Fellowship *in heavenly blessedness* is included. Most evidently, the writer of this charge was thinking at the time of a fellowship that would not be confined to this world. He was an old man, his work was nearly done, and no one could have long continued fellowship with him on earth. If Elijah, when waiting for the fiery chariot, had said to the disciple with whom he was holding his last earthly conversation—"I earnestly desire that you may have fellowship with me,"—would it not have been plain at once that he had reference to a meeting in the world to which he was about to ascend? The prophet of the New Testament had reached a similar crisis, was in a similar attitude; his mantle was about to fall; he was waiting at the gate of heaven—already he belonged more to heaven than to earth; and when daily expecting this change from world to world, it was his ardent wish that his disciples should have fellowship with him not only here, but there.

Try to imagine what that fellowship in heaven must be. Fellowship with the apostles, and with all, in every age, who have their faith and spirit—fellowship with them, not merely while they are compassed about with the shadows of earth, but amidst the clear splendours of heaven. However imperfect their fellowship might have been below, however mournful their estrangements here; now,

"they see eye to eye, with the voice together do they sing." What conversations, what researches, what surprises, what sublimities of service and devotion must that fellowship involve! How pure those spirits are! how wise, how rich, how excellent in strength! If they served the Redeemer when they were with us, how joyfully do they serve Him now! If while with us, they were "going on unto perfection," how high must be their present flight! What must Pascal's "Thoughts" be now? What Baxter's discoveries of the "Saint's Everlasting Rest?" Luther's courage, Howe's majesty, Whitefield's fervour, Hall's lofty strains? How divine must those words be which John is at this moment speaking; or in which Paul may be now "making known, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God?" And if on earth the various lights and gifts of the church make "increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love," how glorious must be the operation of this law, in the fellowship of perfected spirits? Do you long to catch their raptures, and to feel their fires? The apostle has told you the grand requisite, and that you may fall into no error, and trust in no merely ideal Saviour, he has set before you the attributes of Him, faith in whom is the medium of every great and happy fellowship,

human or divine, on earth or in heaven. Be sure that you are exercising true trust in the true Saviour—the Saviour who is eternal; who is man as well as God; who is the Word, and in whose sacrifice "life hath given itself away, to bring back death to life." Then, although there may exist a circumstantial difference between you and others who also truly trust, by fellowship with Him who is their life, you must have fellowship with them, here and hereafter; just as the branches, though some are in light and some in shadow—though some wave aloft and some trail below—though some are great and others small—having fellowship with their one life-giving stem, have fellowship with their kindred branches, long as the tree shall live.

The Unction from the Holy One.

"When streams of love, from Christ the spring,
Descend to every soul,
And heavenly peace, with balmy wing,
Shades and bedews the whole:

"'Tis like the oil, divinely sweet,
On Aaron's reverend head;
The trickling drops perfumed his feet,
And o'er his garments spread.

"'Tis pleasant as the morning dews
That fall on Zion's hill,
Where God His mildest glory shows,
And makes His grace distil."

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."—1 JOHN ii. 20.

ALLUSION was made in a former discourse to a certain erroneous theory which prevailed in the very earliest age of Christianity, and to which these epistles were intended to furnish at once a reproof and a reply. This theory was to the effect that Christ was not really a man, but that what looked like a human being was, in truth, something essentially spectral, bodiless, and vanishing, as the angelic appearances were of old;—that He only seemed to be a man, and of course only

seemed to be crucified. At the sight of this monster error, John, the aged champion of the faith, rose to strike it down as with a lance of light. The thought of the unhappy men who had been enchanted by it, of the ruin they were in, and the ruin they might spread, kindled his decaying fires of life, called forth the sleeping "thunder" of his spirit, and, gentle as he was, roused him to describe and denounce their new notion in terms of terrible severity. "Many deceivers are come into the world," said he, "who confess not that Jesus is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and Antichrist."

"Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." After speaking of them thus, he turns to those whose faith, though it might be weak was real, and says, in effect:— "But you know better: you know all things in relation to the present question; and why? Because you have received from the Holy Saviour a holy influence, which has been given to lead you nto all truth; and therefore you will not become the victims of destroying error. Those unspiritual men know nothing of spiritual truth. 'But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.'" Let us inquire into the meaning of these remarkable words.

I. "THE HOLY ONE." Who is He? Besides the roll of Divine titles which we have recently considered, this is one which he claims for Christ. It had been repeatedly ascribed to Him before, not only by men, but by voices falling from another world.* And, although all ransomed spirits are called God's "holy ones," the term applies in its highest truth to Christ alone; for, to which of the sons of men could you ever point, and say,—"Behold the Holy One of God!" Some, indeed, there have been whose lives have shone through all time as examples respectively of some separate excellence, but their characters have shown a want of proportion, or a tendency to excess in some one quality, and as if to stain the pride of man, they have each in some flagrant instance failed in the very grace for which they were most renowned.† In hours of darkness Abraham the true, equivocates; Job the patient, is insubmissive; Moses the meek, strikes the rock in anger; Elijah the fearless, hides in the desert from his foe; David the seraphic, plunges into the sins of the senses; Simon, called Peter, "a rock," for his strong and stern decision, has to be reminded that he might rather be called Jonas, "a dove," for the weak, scared, fluttering spirit he displayed in the storm of

* See Psalm xvi. 10; Isa. xliii. 14, 15: xlix. 7; Luke vii. 35; Mark x. 24; Acts iii. 14.

† See Fuller on Genesis; Discourse xix.

temptation.* But in the every act of every hour Christ is "the altogether lovely." "His life towers above the mist of centuries—the one perpetual miracle of history, the holy ideal of a perfect humanity." To this all voices bear witness. Ask the multitudes who thronged to hear His gracious words; ask Judas, ask Pilate, ask the dying thief —and there is but one reply. Ask the modern sceptic, and you find that although he will sport with every other sanctity in the temple of religion, he spares this. Leaving human witnesses, question celestial spirits, and go with the prophet to the very gate of heaven, to catch the cadence of its harpers, and the thunder of its songs, and, as if heaven had no other thought, you hear only the thrice-repeated ascription of holiness addressed to the Lord upon His throne.

But the evangelist is not now speaking merely in a general way of Christ, but of Christ as our High Priest. As a Jew, his teachings were tinctured with recollections of the Jewish temple-service, and when he thought of Jesus he thought of Him as Priest. The high priest was the "holy one" of the ceremonial religion; and when, on the occasion of some grand festival, he stood before the people arrayed in the speaking splendours of his office, he was covered with the symbols of

* John xxi. 15

holiness. Over his shoulders hung the pure white raiment; before his breast glistened the gems of burning purity; on his brow was bound the crown of virgin gold; and on that crown was cut the legend—"Holiness to the Lord." His hand was placed upon a spotless victim, and when it was sacrificed, bearing the vessel of blood for the mystic sprinkling, he entered the holiest of all.

What the high priest was in shadow, Jesus was in reality. In Him was seen the perfect realisation of the idea, which had so long been typified; the idea of a High Priest who should ever live to make intercession for us. He was the true Holy One. And "such a High Priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens." A priest who could be charged with the slightest infraction of the law would have been no Saviour. If he had been guilty in one point only, he would have been himself as truly a sinner, as if he had been guilty of all; and, in presenting sacrifice, he must have presented it "first for his own sins." If he had, like Christ, but one solitary offering to make, its efficacy would have been exhausted before it reached us, and we should have lived unsanctified, and died unsaved. The hopeless debtor can never be a surety for a debtor; the helpless slave never

liberates his companion slave; nor the fallen lift the fallen from the dust. So that all our religion, with its perfection of righteousness and infinity of consolation, depends upon the single fact, that Christ is "the Holy One" of God. In Him, for the first time on our earth, holiness shone forth in its perfect brightness, and yet in a shape which man could bear to see. Before His advent it had indeed been manifested, but only in forms that filled our guilty spirits with dismay. Holiness, with its flaming sword, waved away from Paradise the first breakers of its laws. Holiness poured forth the waters of the deluge, and the fires that consumed the cities of the plain. With the bright white shaft of the tempest, holiness struck down the soldiers of idolatrous Amaziah.* The Assyrian army melted like snow at the glance of the Lord, when He appeared against them in the glory of His holiness. But now, in the person of Christ, holiness has appeared under a new aspect; has visited the earth to save it; has achieved a work which sets the Divine love at liberty, and made it possible for law itself to smile upon the sinner, and sanction the forgiveness of his sin. In Christ, holiness is our friend; it gives our crown, guards our safety, and inspires our joy. We can give thanks, not at the remembrance of love alone,

* 2 Kings i. 3.

but at the remembrance of holiness, through the redemptive death of Him who is the Holy One of God.

II. "THE UNCTION FROM THE HOLY ONE." What does that expression mean? The Spirit of God is here intended; not as to His nature, but as to His agency; not in His essential attributes, but in His emanations. Literally an unction is an anointing; and amongst the solemnities anciently observed by the Jews at the inauguration of priest or king, anointing the head with oil, symbolised shedding on the soul that holy influence which is from above. Now mark three things.

First. This unction comes down from Christ *to all His people.* Again and again did He seek to quicken the languid attention of His followers to the fact, that this influence would come to them as the very consequence of His own departure. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."*

Our conceptions of the subject will be assisted by a reference to the ceremony which the sacred writer seems to have had in view while inditing the sentence before us—the ceremony of anointing the High Priest. It differed materially from that observed at the installation of an inferior servant

* John xvi. 7.

of the temple. When any obscure priest was consecrated, the unction was only suffered lighty to touch his brow; but when the supreme pontiff was set apart to his office, there was poured over him such a deluge of fragrant, reviving essence that it suffused his features, bathed his robes, and streamed to his very feet. Now, remember, Christ is not only our Priest, He is our Head. Combine these ideas, and you catch the spirit of the metaphor. As the body of the priest received the unction from the head, we have received an unction from the Holy One; "for we are members of His body, His flesh, and His bones." "I speak a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His church." He was "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." "The Spirit was given without measure to Him;" and from Him it flows to all who are identified with His life. From the Head that wears the crown it comes down to the meanest member—down to the hand that bears the vessels of the Lord—down to the finger that beckons directions to the people—down, down to the very foot that dips in the dust. If you have none of this influence, you are "none of His;" you may think you are, but you are not; you may produce your imaginary evidences, but the grand evidence is wanting; you may have assurance, but your assurance is diabolic, not divine.

Secondly. This influence from Christ makes all His members *holy*. A holy influence must have a holy effect, and this effect must be the true test of your character. "Ah!" some aged father amongst us is ready to reply; "I trust yours is only the language of inexperience; for if it be true, I am a lost man. I am more conscious of the presence of sin within me, than of holiness; and I never felt my sinfulness so much as now. Every day I seem to discover in my heart some unsuspected recesses of depravity. I strive against it, but seem almost to strive in vain. It cleaves to me; I cannot shake it off. Like the criminal in ancient story, who was condemned to be fettered to his dead companion, foot to foot, face to face, lip to lip, and cast into the depth of the desert, there slowly, slowly to waste and die, I sometimes cry—'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!'"

Let me not, however, be misunderstood. I say not that Christians, to verify their high vocation, must all at once be perfectly holy men, but that they must be the recipients of a holy influence—an influence that will show the traces of its presence, and work effects accordant with its nature. And some of these very effects you have now described; for it is not in the nature of sin to enlighten us; sin does not mourn over sin; sin

does not turn shivering with horror from itself; sin does not fill us with humility, and strike us to the dust of penitence; all these are the effects of a holy influence. These are only holy sorrows, holy agonies, holy aspirations. And besides, when your judgment is clear and serene, you will allow that you are at times conscious of holy joys, holy activities, and keen, delighted sympathy with holy things. This assertion cannot for a moment be withdrawn or qualified. Whatever other principle may be of doubtful divinity, this is divine. Whatever other laws may be repealed, this will stand for ever sacred and inviolate as the throne of God; that all who belong to the Holy One must be holy —and holy, not by the action of their own infected nature, but by communications from on high. Their life may now be faint and low; their armour of light may be dim with the stains of the conflict, the dust of the road, and the trace of the fall; there may be on their very piety spots of pollution and wrinkles of decay; but a time is coming when we all shall be presented as one body in the presence of His glory, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Thirdly. Christ, by giving this unction to all His people, *shows their essential unity, with Himself, and with each other.* In the last discourse we looked at the common faith which forms the

principle of their fellowship; we now have to look at the common spirit by which that fellowship is witnessed and proclaimed.

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious ointment upon the head,
That ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard:
That went down to the skirts of his garments:
As the dew of Hermon,
And as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion:
For there the Lord commanded the blessing,
Even life for evermore."*

This is one of the songs of Zion which John had often heard read in the synagogue, or chanted in the Temple, over whose deep thoughts and picturesque expressions he had thought in the silence of his lonely chamber, and which, perhaps, when a youth, he had sung when rowing on the lake. It must have had a peculiar charm for his loving heart; he could scarcely have used the words of our text without thinking over it. "And the unction from the Holy One" would be ever associated in his mind with the unity of those who receive it.

There is no natural similitude between the two things which are mentioned in this fragment of Hebrew poetry;—between the ointment flowing over Aaron, and brethren dwelling together in

* Psalm cxxxiii.

unity; but, on the principle which has now been suggested, the similitude is clear, and the argument convincing. All Christians, however insignificant, however obscure, however remote, however diversified in the place, or form, or function—in the shape, or shade, or texture of those denominationalisms which are but the garments of Christianity, and not Christianity itself—are all parts of one living system; and since the influence richly poured upon Christ must of necessity touch and affect every one of them, the fact stands confessed before the world, that—"partakers of one spirit," they are "members of one body."

This great idea seems set forth in yet brighter distinctness and more alluring grace by the additional image of the dew—the dew that descended from Hermon upon the mountains of *Zion*. The *Zion* of Jerusalem could not have been here intended, for that was thirty miles away; the allusion must be to that which is mentioned by Moses as "Mount *Zion*, which is Lebanon." Hermon was the name given to the higher crest; *Zion* to the lower, of the same mountain range.* The copious dew which bathed the higher elevation would fall and flow upon the lower; and, therefore, all the productions of the

* Pococke's Description of the East, vol. ii., part i., pp. 74, 75; Buckingham's Travels among the Arab Tribes, p. 395.

entire range, however disconnected in appearance, were united in one essential respect. Each secret root, each flake of moss, each living speck, and every microscopic vein of vegetation; the stately tree, the flowering trailer, the tiny threads of grass, the trembling bells of beauty bending in the gale —different as they were in place, in shape, and in magnitude — were all one; for steeped in the unction of the morning, and covered with quivering sparks of liquid light, showered in millions from the same invisible Hand, they all had one fellowship, one interest, one source of life, and formed one scene of harmonious loveliness and peace, the perfect image of "brethren dwelling together in unity."*

This is a truth which is too much neglected, and the neglect of which must impair our piety, and diminish our enjoyment. If I have received according to my measure of the gift of Christ, then every one who has in his measure received this gift is related to me by ties which transcend the limits of sect or station, and will survive the

* "'Tis like the dew wherewith grey morning
Impearls Mount Hermon's head.
His green with speckled flowers adorning,
Artlessly diapred;

"From Hermon to Mount Zion pouring
His fertile rivulets,
And all engreening and enflowering
Those pleasant mountainets." DAVISON, 1599.

separating powers of time or death. For him to repel me, or for me to repel him, is for hand to war with hand, or foot with foot, as in the heathen fable of the insurrection amongst the members of the body; it is as strange as it would be for leaf to quarrel with its brother leaf, or flower with its companion flower, on those slopes of Hermon, which, softly pictured in the morning sky, helped to teach the fisherman, who saw them from the waves of the distant sea, divinely beautiful parables of love.

III. "YE KNOW ALL THINGS." We have now to inquire how this assertion is to be understood. The holy influence, of which we have been speaking, has an enlightening virtue. It rested upon Christ as "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." It made him of "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Communicated by Him to us, it must have similar effects. The expression used to declare this fact startles us by its boldness. A limited being can only have a limited knowledge. In strict and absolute truth, there is only one Being in the universe to whom it can be said, "Lord, thou knowest all things." From the nature of the case, there must be some qualifica-

tion of the epithet; it must mean, that we know all things within certain limits; and what are they?

Things that are *holy* are meant. The emphasis here on the word holy suggests that the knowledge spoken of must be knowledge of holy things. An object can only be seen by some appropriate faculty, the faculty to which it naturally appeals. We must be mathematically minded to make the highest attainments in mathematics; poetically minded to have insight into the things of poetry; scientifically minded to know the deep things of natural science; spiritually minded to know the things of the Spirit. Holiness alone can understand holiness. "Without holiness no man can see the Lord," in His works or in His word, either in earth or in heaven. Without holiness you may indeed understand Hebrew as well as Caiaphas did; Latin as well as Pilate did; the Greek as well as that Athenian did who charged Paul with setting forth "strange gods;" the geography and antiquities of Palestine as perfectly as the proudest Pharisee that ever wore phylacteries; but God's book will be a sealed book to you; and though you may have a grammatical knowledge of the words which reveal holy things, you will never know the things themselves. For "the natural man preceiveth not the things of the

Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" while "he that is spiritual judgeth all things." Well might Augustine say, "the *heart* is the true theologian;" for, from the nature of things, as well as from the sovereign declaration of the Great Teacher, we learn that only "the pure in heart shall see God."

Things that are *essential* are meant. It is not essential to a man's knowledge of Homer that he should know how many rowers Ulysses had, or which was written first, the Iliad or the Odyssey.* It is not essential to a sufficient knowledge of God that a man should understand everything to which the Book of God alludes. "There are essentials and non-essentials in Christianity, for to say that it hath no essential parts, would be to say that it hath no being; for certainly that is nothing unto which nothing is essential. And to say that there are no non-essential parts, is to say that a man cannot be a Christian unless he knows everything of truth, and unless he punctually do everything of duty, whether he know it or not. Then a man could not be a Christian, unless he did certainly know the meaning of the number 666, and a thousand difficult passages besides, up and down in the Scripture; so that, in fact, to deny the distinction of essential and non-essential parts

* Seneca.

in Christianity, must either be to deny that there is such a thing as Christianity, or that there is such a thing as a Christian."*

There are things in this book relating to the office of the Christian ministry, and the best machineries for the social workings of the Christian life; and these things, not being involved in the very essence of Christianity, may be misinterpreted, as we know they are, by many who are earnest lovers of truth; and the fact is patent, that although they know essential things, there are other things, equally the matters of revelation, respecting which they are mistaken. There are things here, which are written for some future age, reserved—as Boyle expressed it—"to quell some future heresy, to solve some yet unformed doubt, or to confound some error that hath not yet a name." And the true meaning of these we do not yet fully know. There are also things here which are intended to be inspired commentaries on the Gospel, rather than parts of its vital structure; and these things, viewed from different angles, may assume different appearances. But spiritual men, however mistaken they may be on marginal and subsidiary questions, know all *essential* things. If they are wrong in other respects, they will not repair to the wrong Refuge, or plunge in the

* John Howe's Works, vol. v, p. 337.

wrong Fountain, or follow the wrong Shepherd. They will never trust to a Saviour who is not God; they will never, like John's contemporaries, trust a Saviour who is not man. Directly such a pretender puts forth his claims, a divine instinct will keep them right, and something within will say, This is not the Saviour I want; this is not the King to whom I owe my allegiance. Sixty-five false Messiahs have appeared in the world since the day of the crucifixion, but the followers of the true Messiah have never ranged under their standards, or swelled the triumphs of their train. If, in any instance, they were deceived for a time, the deception was detected at last. "A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger." Ignorant as they may be in other things, with reference to these they are divinely wise. Many a poor slave, who has never heard of Protestant or Romanist, Churchman or Dissenter, knows the liberty wherewith Christ makes the spirit free. Many a little child, whose mind is fresh and simple as the flower with the dew upon it, and whose mind has never been distracted by the mysteries of light which so absorb "the wise and prudent," knows mysteries of love which have never been revealed to them; *and last night,* doubtless, while the long hours *were rolling* wearily away—amidst the moans of

the tempest, and the strokes of the rain lashing the lattice—in many a cottage, and many a garret, there was a sufferer whose thin cheek was lighted with the peace of God, whose hollow voice murmured praises, and whose mind, ignorant of books, was filled with Divine illuminations, which floods of eloquence and torrents of poetry would not have been able even faintly to express.

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding." You can never get wisdom, till you get the Spirit's unction; and you can never get that till you get Christ. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the [ritualists] require a sign, and the [rationalists] seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, to the ritualists a stumbling-block, and to the rationalists foolishness; but to them which are called, whether from the rank of the ritualists or the rationalists, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Prevalent Errors on Justification considered *

"I threatened to observe the strict decree
Of my dear God with all my power and might:
But I was told by one it could not be:
Yet I might trust in God to be my light.

"Then will I trust, said I, in Him alone.
Nay, e'en to trust in Him, was also His:
We must confess that nothing is our own:
Then I confess that He my succour is.

"But to *have* nought is ours, not to confess
That we have nought. I stood amazed at this,
Much troubled, till I heard a friend express,
That all things were more ours by being His.
What Adam had, and forfeited for all,
Christ keepeth now, who cannot fail or fall."

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."—ROMANS x. 3.

IN venturing, dear brethren, to suggest a few hints on the "Prevalent Errors respecting the Doctrine of Justification," we feel that we have undertaken a charge, not only of solemn interest, but peculiar delicacy. We beg to disclaim, at the outset, any intention to determine on our own authority what is truth and what is error, or to

* Letter to an Association of Churches, from their assembled Ministers.

censure, even in thought, any whose faiths differ from our own; our language to all is, "We would not have dominion over your faith, but would be helpers of your joy." Our only authority is the Word of God, and our only object of censure will be the error, not the errorist, keeping in view the love of Him who hates not the sinner, but the sin. But as truths and errors are principles of action, out of which are the issues of life or of death, and as truths and errors respecting the first idea of religion, "the doctrine of justification," are principles which may throw brightness or shadow over eternity; tender reverence for spirits we believe to be in the wrong will be best shown, not by our silence, but by trying to offer them, in its pure efficacy, the truth which saves, and assailing, with earnest argument and arrowy appeal, the error that destroys. This we also regard as one of the high vocations of our associated life. "The steadfast maintenance," says Luther, "of the doctrine of justification by faith, is the surest evidence of a standing or falling church;" and we would aspire to receive the plaudit of the "King of saints"—"Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."

Justification is more than forgiveness. Though in the life of the Christian these blessings are separated in idea merely, and not in fact, it is

needful to discriminate between them, in order that we may set in the most distinct relief the sentiments we would submit to your attention. In the evangelic sense, forgiveness ensures safety; justification confers honour. To forgive, is to free from the consequences of sinning; to justify, to acquit from the charge of sin. The one implies that the person interested has violated law; the other declares that the law has no complaint to bring. He whom the King, from His "glorious high throne," pronounces justified, may challenge the scrutiny of creation, and cry, in words that burn, "Who is he that condemneth?"—"who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

In the course of our attempt to specify and convict as errors some prevalent opinions respecting the doctrine of justification, we mention, in the first instance—the notion that the spirit may receive an honourable discharge at the great day, on the ground of obedience to the law.

It is an opinion which exists, indeed, in floating formless hopes, rather than in the shape of clear and lighted thought; yet it is sufficiently defined and powerful to sway the existence of vast multitudes. It is not a novelty, owing its being to the fashions of thinking peculiar to our own age, and taking its hue from the colour of passing circumstances; it has always existed, and springs from

the permanent tendencies of our fallen nature. Our object, however, is not to limit your attention to what is new, but what is prevalent, and this has very extensive prevalence. We meet with it in all classes, but it most abounds, perhaps, in the lower levels of our country population, and is to be met with more among the "highways and hedges," than in "the streets and lanes of the city." The ignorant, who live in districts peculiar for intellectual stagnation, habitually consider religion solely in the character of a law, and not a few hope to be justified through compliance with its prescriptions. Disciples who tread in the steps of Him who "went through the villages, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom," hear, in the green lane, or under the tattered thatch, many variations of the sentiment, "It will all be right with me at last, for I have done no wrong;" and this, translated into other language, is an expression of hope for justification through the law.

You, dear brethren, have not so learned Christ as to make it needful to occupy much time in the process of showing this notion to be error; yet, perhaps, elementary as this principle is, it would not be without profit, even for the most instructed Christians, sometimes to pause and reconsider why they come to the conclusion that the law can never justify. We would remind you "how exceeding

broad" the commandment seems, when explained by the commentaries of Jesus Christ, and the penetrative teachings of His Spirit. God legislates for the soul as well as for the body; the moral law has to do with all the moral life, whether it darkles in secrecy, or flashes in sight; from the motive to the movement, from the seed of thought to the flower of action, everything that conscience affects, comes within the range of law, and its demand is, "Obey always, obey in everything, obey perfectly. This do and thou shalt live; but the soul that sinneth, it shall die." It is in earnest, and as the law of God is only another name for the perfect standard of right, to suppose that it can be satisfied with something less than its present demand, is to suppose the righteous God to be satisfied with something less than right. When Hilkiah found the law and read it to the people, they rent their clothes, struck with consternation that they had committed so many offences against a long-forgotten law. By this knowledge of what the law actually requires, comes "the knowledge of sin," and we quail with fear, and are voiceless with shame, in the light of the "great white throne." "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." No law can acquit a man who is convicted of its violation; if we should receive acquittal, it must be on another principle.

We are, therefore, prepared for the speech of the oracle, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified."

A more prevalent theory is that which supposes that sorrow for the past, and amendment for the future, will be accepted as the ground of justification.

This theory is often felt where it has received no precise expression, and is one of the faiths of the daily increasing class who slight historical Christianity. The church ought not to ignore the fact that a deistical spirit is spreading through society, giving a tinge to its most fascinating literature, throwing a sickly cast over the piety of many Christians who are its brightest ornaments, and finding advocacy for various forms of its principle, alike from the self-taught operative, and the graduate of the university. We are not about to show the different species of English deism; it will be sufficient for our purpose simply to notice the general distinction, that, among the less educated sections of society, it appears in passionate and insulting opposition to the revelation of Jesus Christ, and that among those of a higher social position and improved intellectual culture, though essentially the same in basis, it speaks of that revelation respectfully. It wears the Christian name; it honours Christ as the grand reformer,

the sublime ideal of a perfect being, and the spiritual teacher of the race. It even acknowledges His divinity, only in the same sense as it would the divinity of man. It is charmed with the poetry, the beautiful spirit, and the earnest enthusiasms of the Christian life; but it would seek these results by following out man's natural tendencies. It uses the epithets of evangelical religion, such as sin, atonement, new birth, prayer, inspiration; but in a light that implies neither miracle nor mystery. It takes its creed from nature, and its language from grace; it changes every ingredient of the medicine, but retains its name. It dismantles and levels to the dust this refuge for the sinner which we call the Gospel, and calls it the Gospel still; it is, in fact, a polite and complimentary rejection of Christianity.

However deism may be divided in sentiment on other questions, it will agree in the general tenet that the sinful spirit may be justified through sorrow and amendment. The idea of the human father, free from imperfection, and heightened to infinity, is the deist's idea of God. "I forgive my child," he says, "on confession of sorrow and promise of amendment; and is the earthly father more merciful than the Father in heaven? Will He not see His child while yet a great way off, hasten to meet him, and say, 'This my son

was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found?'"

We are not, at this stage of the argument, aiming to state what the truth is, but simply to show that this, at least, is not the truth. It would be easy to prove this by reference to our own standard of appeal; but conversing with those whose sad distinction is that they refuse it, we can only meet argument with argument. We might remind them that God is not only a Father but a lawgiver; and to forgive His child in the sense they mean, to appoint him a place in Paradise, and crown him with those glories which are the constituted rights of innocency, is also to treat that child as just. That, as the act of the infinitely holy God, is impossible, except on grounds that His law would sanction. The question is, would sorrow and amendment be such grounds? Sorrow for sin is only a mournful confession that the charge of sin is true, therefore that could not justify. Amendment is necessarily imperfect; the highest regenerated life on earth is most conscious of this imperfection, most ready to confess that sin taints the essence of every service; and sinful tears, sinful prayers, sinful actions will never take away sin; therefore sinful and imperfect amendment could not justify. Besides this, if amendment could be considered as perfect, the future would

never change the facts of the past. The most perfect and incessant obedience is due, and always has been. If we could pay it henceforth, nothing could alter the fact that we once withheld it. The law "requireth that which is past." The law would still say, "Pay me that thou owest." We should still be in hopeless debt; for this additional reason, amendment would not justify. The requirements of the case, therefore, would not be met. There could be no justification filling the soul with soft and sure delight after the tears of sorrow and the struggles for amendment, "like the clear shining after rain."

Another prevalent opinion is, that justification is wrought by Christ, along with certain co-operative actions of the creature. It is essentially the principle of a system which has lately been silently growing among us, and which, though not avowedly Papal, we are not at liberty to call Protestant, since that name is with its disciples a thing for apology and a word of shame. Watching it in its stealthy steps to power within that State-apparatus of worship and instruction which many sainted, yet we think mistaken spirits, have verily thought to furnish the national defences of Protestantism—Rome has admired the tenacious purpose and subtle policy, and said, "If a fox go up it shall break their stone wall." As it identifies itself with

that which claims the distinction of nationality, it may be examined, without the charge of sectarian intrusiveness, by all who belong to the nation.

The principle which we have just attributed to this section of professing Christians, is supported by the doctrine and the genius of their system. One of their authorities asserts, that, "an assent to the doctrine that faith alone justifies, does not at all preclude the doctrine of works justifying also." * "Justification," says another, "is a continual work, it must be the Spirit's work, not Christ's." "The distinction between deliverance from guilt and deliverance from sin is not scriptural." † He condemns those who make "justification to consist in the act by which the soul trusts in the merit of Christ." "We are justified by the presence of God within us, from which sanctification proceeds." The error in this principle springs from the confusion of two distinct things. Justification is Christ's work for us; sanctification, Christ's work in us. The former refers to state; the latter to character: the one is from the Father's word; the other from the physician's skill. The child who needs the first for going against authority into the infected place, needs the second for taking the infection. To speak of being justified by those works which are but the symp-

* Tract No. 90. † Newman on Justification.

toms and results of the cure effected by the Spirit, is to say of the child, as the light of visible recovery begins to flush and mantle on his cheek, that, in having more and more health, he has more and more right to be free from blame for that disobedience which gives him the disease. This must be error. That influence by which God heals His already-forgiven child can have no part in releasing him from the charge of sin.

In other ways this system is also convicted of the notion that something must be associated with the work of Christ before we can be justified. It preaches the atonement, but with reserve. "This doctrine," says one of the Tracts, "so far from being what it is supposed, is in fact the very 'secret of the Lord!' which is not to be lightly spoken of by man; but which '*He* will show to them that fear Him.'" "The exclusive and naked exposure of so very sacred a truth is dangerous."* While the truths respecting Christ are permitted to glimmer doubtfully in some holy place, ideas which are likely to divert attention from Him are set in burning distinctness and in open vision. This theology says to Jesus, "Hail, Master!" and owns Him as the Saviour of men, yet perpetually recognises something essential besides His regal act and simple prescriptions of

* Tract on Reserve.

mercy. It is essential to be within the charmed limit of a certain ecclesiastical frame-work, and the merest idolater within is preferred to the truest worshipper without it. It is essential that we should receive "baptism as an instrument of justification;" thus confusing the efficacy of the cross with the subtle magnetic force of ritual grace; and on the principle which once offered "the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul," a certain material action is supposed to produce a moral effect, working change in state and change in nature. It will peal the announcement of inspiration, "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;" but will subjoin, as essential, the dogma of the church, that there is a mediator between the Mediator and man, even the priest. It invites the thirsty, exhausted soul to the waters of life, but the priest is the guardian spirit of the fountain, and he virtually says, "If any man thirst, let him come to *me* and drink." These conclusions are reached, and this assumption is defended, not by argument, founded on the nature of things, but by reference to the authority of the church. The church teaches the principles now under discussion, and we must of course believe! In conversing about them, therefore, with their advocates, we will not, in the first instance, attempt to prove them to be

erroneous by showing that they are at variance with reason, but by respectfully inquiring on what ground the church claims its lofty legislative function, and showing, if possible, the inadequacy of its claim. This instantly brings us to the revealed will of God; for whatever prerogative a community formed on the principle of godliness may have, it must be derived from God. "The servant is not greater than his lord," neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. Sublime as authority may be, it must bow to that which gives authority. The will of God, the fountain of authority, only finds perfect expression in His word, and—"if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book." We must, therefore, to decide the question, make our ultimate appeal to that word. Should the church say that its decisions are to be taken in preference to those of Scripture, we are still reduced to the inconsistency of appealing to that word, to know that we may not appeal to it; and where, in the Scriptures, do we find that we may not search the Scriptures, but must, to know the science of salvation, listen to a supplemental authority? We say, then, to those who appear as the executive of that authority, "Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye?" Men may cry, in a storm of passionate zeal,

"Hear the Church;" but, sounding royally above "the noise of the seas, and the tumult of the people," a voice from the excellent glory proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him."

If we have shown that the principle of associating the moral, ecclesiastical, or ritualistic works of man with the work of God in the procurement of justification, is only professed to be received from what is evidently only human authority, we have done something to show that principle to be an error. But this, and the principles already discussed, will be more completely exploded as erroneous, in the process of stating, in the next place, what God has declared to be the truth.

What is the truth? The oracles of God declare, first, the truth as to the provision that is made for our justification. We are assured that the sinner is justified by Jesus Christ alone: "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." These are selections from innumerable sentences of inspira-

tion which teach that Jesus Christ "came into the world;" that He appeared in "the likeness of men;" that He stood in the relation of representative for those who had broken the law; that being regarded in that relation, "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, to put Him to grief, and to make His soul an offering for sin;" that if we are among those for whom He is answerable, His mysterious sorrow will be instead of ours; and that the sinner will have the same ground of acceptance as the Saviour, even the "righteousness of God;"* that this is not an expedient among other expedients, but the solitary resource of misery; that now, mercy is not only righteous, but employs a righteousness as the medium of its exercise; that God appears in this transaction, not speaking doubtful language and shining with a shaded light, but speaking in deep, sincere, and awful tones of love to the criminal, and wrath against the crime—while He is bright with a radiance which compels the worshipper to exclaim, in solemn entrancement, "O Lord, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty; who coverest thyself with light as with a garment." The spirit of the law is glorified, though the form of its satisfaction is so sublimely strange that it is among the things

* "It was by obeying for men, and not merely by being punished for them, that our blessed Lord reconciled them to the Father."—ANSELM, *Cur Deus Homo.*

"angels desired to look into;" and now unto many a mighty spirit, whose history may have been varied and magnificent as the story of a star, "is made known, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God." The Divine word also declares the truth as to the way in which the spirit may be brought in contact with this provision. The first question that springs from the spirit in agony is, "What must I do to be saved?" Must I prepare? must I be long on trial? must I try by some elaborate process to make myself fit for the reception of the gift? The simple answer to this question is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." To speak of any condition is to speak of appeasing the fire of hunger to prepare for taking sustenance; getting convalescent to prepare for adopting scientific means for recovery; or securing right to a favour. We have only to believe, and belief is the simplest of all simple things, it is the acceptance of a gratuitous bestowment. After this is done, so tenaciously does the mind cling to the idea of merit in some form, that we must be watchful lest we unconsciously attach meritorious efficacy to faith, and trust in our very trust; as if we obtained shelter in the act of flight, rather than in the covert to which we flee.

The apostle anticipates this possibility when,

speaking of justification, he says, "It is of faith that it might be of grace. We must "*submit* to the righteousness of God." We must submit to enter an ark which we could not build, which we may not navigate, but which we must only enter in powerless dependence on unseen love and power. The work of saving man, like the work of creating him, is Divine throughout. Other religions represent it as man's work towards God; our religion as God's work toward man.

We ought not to close these remarks without considering the practical question, "How may we best counteract prevalent errors?"

The first step in the course will be, seeking more brightly-defined visions of the truth ourselves. Many Christians, it is to be feared, have misty and twilight thoughts on this central question, and they are contented with the general idea that the mercy of God comes through Jesus Christ. Many others, whose confession of faith we should consider right, do not make that confession so much from living conviction as from memory. Locke, speaking of "those religious people who believe right by chance, without examination," says, "it is doubtful whether the luckiness of the accident excuses the irregularity of the proceeding." Our faith should certainly come through thought; but let us also remember, our thoughts should come

through the Word of God. Philosophy will not discover this great fact, for nature says, "It is not in me." It is, in the highest sense, a *doctrine*— something which was unknown till the Revealer of secrets gave it utterance. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." That light flows only through the transparent sentences of revelation. We must search that revelation, therefore, but not in shivered fragments and separate ideas, but as a complete system. In order to see the light, we must have that disposition which is the seeing faculty, and must cry to that Enlightener who opens the eyes of the understanding, "Open thou *mine* eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

We must seek the counteraction of error by presenting the truth. The ancient lawgiver said, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit in them!" This earnest wish has been fulfilled in that spiritual nation of which Israel was the type. We are prophets, not indeed foretelling, but, *out*-telling the will of the Eternal. He has said to us, "Shine ye as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." As the shining of the day-spring is to melt the mists that creep over the landscape, the shining of truth is to scatter those errors that are the mists of the mind. The

imagery of this charge is beautifully suggestive of what is adapted to promote instructional efficiency. It is suggestive of gentleness. The still, calm, shining of light which melts over nature, suffusing without breaking the tiniest living thread, or feather, or tinted spray, reminds us of the spirit with which we should reveal the truth. "Shine ye!" "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle, apt to teach, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves." "Woe unto him by whom offence cometh." Forgetfulness of this simple principle, in the pulpit and in the place of intercourse, has prevented the success of many a sound argument. Honest experimenters in physics are more likely to give and receive calmly that light which discovers error, than inquirers in theology. The knowledge of this weakness should put us on our guard against doing unconscious injustice to the sentiments of opponents, lest by ungentle dealing we sear when we would soften, and irritate where we would allay. If we indeed have found the truth, there is every motive to tender consideration for those who have not. Only omniscient love knows the history of every spiritual life—its tendencies, its education, the forms under which religion was first presented to it, the opportunities since enjoyed of eradicating errors which struck root before the power of trying

them was unfolded. All these things, when considered, will soften the spirit of controversy, and increase the force of truth. While our way of presenting truth should be gentle as the shining light, it should also be as clear. It was not so much the positive statement of error, as the habit of stating truth through dim hints and vague generalities, that led to so much defection and spiritual death among the nonconformist churches in the last century; whether, therefore, we simplify the lessons of infancy, or are called to give forth the ideas of inspiration in the solemn meeting, let us make it matter of unceasing prayer, that we may not obscure the greatest truth, and thus betray the greatest trust, but that there may be conveyance of clear thoughts through clear words, like "spirits clothed in light."

In order to the most effectual counteraction of error, we must silence the objections founded on the possibilities of practical abuse, by exhibiting the practical improvement. There is an impression that our doctrine of the gratuitous and instant reception of the believing penitent to all the honours of righteousness is unfavourable to the sanctions of the purest morality; and hence it has been branded as "the frightful doctrine of justification by faith." Such an objection has been *suggested by the* conduct of some who seem to

wear the badge of discipleship, though it is in reality but the livery of a sect; who make the whole of religion to consist in uttering a few talismanic sentences, and who with the show of passionate zeal for the glory of God, the "doctrines of grace," and the efficacy of the work wrought by Jesus Christ, circulate the deadly sentiment, "sin cannot hurt believers;" and assert their discharge from the law not only as a ground of acceptance, but a rule of life. Never did sin more treacherously assume the mantle of sanctity, or the fire of hell so mimic the light of heaven. Let it be our unceasing prayer that we may never, by injudicious advocacy or inconsistent practice, be parties to the infliction of such an injury to the interests of truth, or cause suffering, insulted Christianity to say, "These are the wounds received in the house of my friends!" "Shall we sin that grace may abound?" Because Christ has done everything that can meritoriously procure forgiveness, are we to do nothing, to show the moral effects of forgiveness? God forbid! Christ is the author, but Christians must ever be the subjects of religion. He has not only placed us in a new relation to the law, but also fused a new life. We are saved by grace, but through its own means, *grace aims* at all the ends of law. The only *difference is,* that "law says, do this and live;

grace, live and do this."* Grace, through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, has wrought the justifying process, and, by the action of its own celestial fire, is working a purifying change; and while the former is essential as a plea, the latter is needful as an evidence. To vary the metaphor, justification is the secret root of "whatsoever things are true, and pure, and lovely, and of good report;" there can be no devoted loyalty, no unwearied service, no healing leaves, no precious fruits of piety without it; and we must say to the stateliest tree of righteousness, "thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." Men may speak of justification by faith and live in sin; they may forget it and live in sin; but they never feel it and live in sin. It is when the truth ceases to have the effect of truth, that the man who holds it sins with facility and misrepresents the Saviour. We are required to recommend our principles by their development. To show forth our religion is not the intellectual assent to a dogma, nor a petrified opinion, but that which from the inspiration of love has the breath of life, and is a living soul; finds shape, voice, and suasive eloquence, and goes about doing good. When transparent speech, and logical felicity of reasoning, will fail to convince men of the truth, this will often succeed. "There

* Vinet.

is no speech nor language where its voice is not heard." A child can understand arguments appealing to sensation, and living epistles of Christ are known and read of all men.

To counteract this error, let us be faithful to our vocation of inviting men to accept the blessings of justification through a crucified Saviour. The truth respecting this doctrine is the fountain of life to a dying world; the errors about it are the foul infusions that weaken its efficacy, or the strong interlacings of wild and rank vegetation, which keep the fainting pilgrim from its margin. If we aim to clarify the stream, or tear away the umbrage which gathers round it, it is only that we may say, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and drink." Come to the broad river which "maketh glad the city of our God." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and whosoever heareth let him say, Come; and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." There are certain forms of high and honoured service possible to the natives of this vale of tears, which are not allowed to the spirits who "circle the throne rejoicing." An angel would burn to discharge the mission of love to which the meanest disciple of Christ is called; but he may not, for he *is only a* "ministering spirit sent forth to minister *unto those* who are the heirs of salvation;" and

though he may reveal the well to Hagar in the desert, he may not point the dying spirit to the springs of life. Soon we shall be "as the angels of God;" let us not, therefore, waste life in soft indulgence, nor dream it away in the luxury of religious emotion, but devote its concentrated strength, in recommending that truth whose name is only another name for Christianity, and in calling the attention of those who are dying by the broken, even if beautifully sculptured, cisterns of worldliness, false philosophy, or ritualism, to Him who is the fountain of living waters, and who says, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink."

Our Anchor within the Veil.

"My Saviour, through time's swelling ocean
Be my guide!
From the tempest's wild commotion,
Hide, O hide!

Life's crystal river,
Storms ruffle never;
Anchor we ever
On that calm tide."

"Oh, watch and pray ere advent dawn!
For thinner than the subtlest lawn
'Twixt thee and death the veil is drawn."

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."—HEBREWS vi. 19, 20.

FULL minds overflow in long sentences, and in the moment of inspiration, when thick-coming thoughts and images crowd upon them, will often pour them forth in splendid confusion, dazzling to common readers, but kindling to congenial spirits. Something like this has been said respecting the *prose* writings of John Milton; and while we *remember*, with deep reverence, the difference

between the inspiration of genius and the inspiration of God, we may apply the remark, with perfect truth, to the writings of the great apostle. He frequently seems impatient to express, and to express at once, the whole of some noble truth, in all its grandeur, in all its suggestiveness, and all its wide relations. In consequence of this peculiarity, it is sometimes difficult to follow him in his rapid march of thought, sudden turns of language, and unexpected forms of illustration. There are many things in the epistles of "our beloved brother Paul," which are "hard to be understood," not only from their intrinsic sublimity, but also from the style in which they are conveyed, and from the bewildering way in which they throng at once upon the mind. We have an instance of his peculiar mode of writing at the end of the sixth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews. In one torrent of living words, and in the course only of a few verses, he speaks to us of the "promise made to Abraham," of "the two immutable things," of the Christian's "hope," of "his strong consolation," of his "refuge," of the "veil," of our "forerunner" within the veil, and of the consecration of Jesus, as "a High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."

The whole subject of this paragraph is too long *for our examination* at one time; let us, there-

fore, restrict our thoughts to the following sentence:—

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."—Hebrews vi. 19, 20.

I. Our hope, we are here told, is "AS AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL."

To the imagination of the writer, life is a sea, the soul is a ship, and hope is the anchor of the soul. It was not the first time that this emblem had been thus poetically applied. He had seen it in the Hebrew writings which he had read at the feet of Gamaliel; in the course of his Greek studies, he had possibly met with the sayings of Socrates, —"to ground hope on a false supposition, is like trusting to a weak anchor." "A ship ought not to trust to one anchor, nor life to one hope."* He had heard the Romans, in proverbial phrase, call a man's last desperate hope, *Anchora sacra*. Finding this metaphor in the service of common life, he baptized it, quickened it with a new meaning, and pressed it into the service of God, employing it to show the superiority of the Christian's hope to the hope of any other man.

* *Similar instances* of the use of the term, more or less obvious, may be found *in Demosthenes*, and also in Sophocles.

II. Our hope, it is further said, "ENTERETH INTO THAT WITHIN THE VEIL."

The idea appears to be this:—A ship shattered with "the battle and the breeze," at length gets near the port; but owing to the shallow waters, or the sweeping tempest, or the temporary prohibition of the authorities on shore, she is not permitted at once to enter the harbour. The sailors then heave out the sheet anchor, and by means of the boat it is carried within the royal dock; and though the ship cannot herself get in, she is thus prevented from being drifted away into the deep sea. To enter into that within the veil, is to enter within the harbour of eternal repose,—this may not at present be permitted, but we may cast our anchor there, and meanwhile wait in safety here.

To convey the whole of the idea which the apostle has in view, two images are combined. Let us, for a few moments, forget the nautical allusion, and think only on the image which is borrowed from the Temple. "The veil" is that which divides earth and heaven; and our anchor "entereth into that which is within the veil."

The words "within the veil," suggest the *mysteriousness* of heaven to the inhabitants of earth. A veil is an instrument of concealment, a symbol *of mystery.* Moses, acting as a kind of type or

figure of his own dispensation, "put a veil over his face," to intimate that the sons of Israel "could not stedfastly look to the end of that which was to be abolished." Before the innermost sanctuary of the Temple there was a veil, which screened from every mortal eye the "great light" that shone beyond it. To this the apostle is here alluding, and from their associations with the word "veil," the Hebrews to whom he wrote, felt that no other word could strike them with such silencing awe, or hint with equal impressiveness the shaded secrecy of heaven.

It is natural that those who are on their way to the heavenly country, should make it the frequent theme of conjectural and speculative thought. But after all, heaven will be a secret to us until we die. "My chief conception of heaven," said Robert Hall to Wilberforce, "is *rest*." "Mine," replied Wilberforce, "is *love*." Perhaps both conceptions are true, and union of perfect love with perfect rest conveys our best idea of heaven, considered simply as a state. But what is the manner of existence there, and what is the true physical theory of another life? How shall we see without these eyes, hear without these ears, act without this material instrument of being? What are the visions, the emotions, the specific employments of heaven? Where and what is the region itself?

Is it a star? Is it a sun? "Is it a vast and splendid cluster of worlds, or is it some spacious, magnificent, and unlimited continent of light and beauty?" Where are "the holy places not made with hands?" Where are "the many mansions of our Father's house?" Where is the grand metropolis of God's moral rule, whence His laws go forth, and "whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord," from every realm of earth, and every age of time? Where stands that throne before which, at this solemn instant, the innumerable companies of the glorified bend in an ecstacy of adoration? The heir of glory dies,—"he giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" These questions are unanswered and unanswerable.

"He that hath found some fledged bird's nest may know
At first sight if the bird be flown;
But what fair field or grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown."

The Gospel is sent to show the way to glory, and not what that glory is. "The Holy Spirit teacheth how we may reach heaven, and not how heaven moves."* In answer to all our questions respecting its nature, the Saviour replies, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "Work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man

* Galileo.

can work." Christ himself demands and absorbs all the time and power that dying men can give; and if, instead of the rays which dimly gleam upon us from the other world, the disclosures of its nature were more resplendent and appealing, they might detain our attention from the cross, and tempt away our thoughts from central truths to incidental speculations. Thanks be to the Father of Lights, that He has only illumined the path of life; that He is loving in what He hides, as well as in what He shows; and that the veil which conceals the future "is woven by the hand of mercy."

The *nearness* of heaven is suggested by the epithet "veil." Christians, there is only a veil between us and heaven! A veil is the thinnest and frailest of all conceivable partitions. It is but a fine tissue, a delicate fabric of embroidery. It waves in the wind; the touch of a child may stir it; an accident may rend it; the silent action of time will moulder it away. A mere cord breaking, a mere "socket of silver" starting from its place, would have opened the veil of the Temple. It was lifted by the priest "once in the circuit of a year;" and at the crucifixion it was parted by an invisible hand. The veil that conceals heaven is only our embodied existence, and though fearfully and wonderfully made, it is only wrought out of our frail mortality. So slight is it, that the puncture

of a thorn, the touch of an insect's sting, the breath of an infected atmosphere, may make it shake and fall. In a bound, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in the throb of a pulse, in the flash of a thought, we may start into disembodied spirits, glide unabashed into the company of great and mighty angels, pass into the light and amazement of eternity, know the great secret, gaze upon splendours which flesh and blood could not sustain, and which no words lawful for man to utter could describe! Brethren in Christ, there is but a step between you and death; between you and heaven there is but a veil!

The *glory* of heaven is suggested by the expression, "within the veil." What was within the veil of the Hebrew temple? Hear the apostle: "After the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat." Not the ark, not the censer, not the rod that budded, not one of these things apart, nor all combined, made the glory of the place, but its true glory was the mystic light that shone abovc the mercy-seat, and symbolised the presence of "the Great King." In like manner,

the manifested presence of God, and that alone, is the true glory of heaven.

There is rich suggestiveness in this figure, since light is not only a glory in itself, but is the cause of all beauty, the source of all light, and the inspiration of all life within its own sphere. If you stand in the morning on the summit of some hill which commands an extensive prospect, you are charmed with the thousand exciting sights of wood and field and river, open down below. But what is the glory of the scene? The sun! It has long been discovered that colour is not in the object which displays it, but is all thrown upon it by the sun, and reflected back again. All is the gift of the sun. The sun has shot into the clouds those threads of light and embroideries of flame; to the sun we owe the blue mist which fills those depths of distance with its bloom, and the soft flush which makes those mountains burn with beauty; the sun gives the leaves their green, the flowers their glow, and that winding line of waves its silver sparkle—all the scene will vanish when the sun declines.

The manifestation of God will be the shekinah of the eternal temple, the sun which makes the eternal day of heaven. There may, indeed, be the *joy arising* from the society of the redeemed, and *from the* survey of created good. Glorious sights

may break upon our view, and glorious sounds may entrance us; we may with triumphant delight thread the mazes of creation, and read the records of eternity; we may learn sciences not yet imagined; and things which no faculties yet born within us could comprehend, and for which the instinct of language could not now supply a name, may fill with unceasing surprise the ever-unfolding soul. But these things will not make our heaven, be the secret of its glory, or the essence of its rapture. Heaven owes its very existence to the presence of God. Where there is nothing to cloud *that*, nothing to make it doubtful, nothing to intercept Divine communications of light and happiness, there must be heaven. "The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

The *holiness* of heaven is here suggested. Within the inner veil was the "Holiest of all." All the Temple was holy, but this was "the Holy of Holies." It was a perpetual memorial of the fact that heaven is a place of exquisite and awful purity; it was a perpetual utterance, in the language of signs, of the solemn proclamation—"Thus saith the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy *place.*" *Into His* dread presence "nothing that

defileth can enter." One glimpse of the throne, with all its dazzling sanctities and congregated wonders, though only given through the light of a vision, made even a prophet cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Conscious of the soils that cleave to our fallen mortality, the thought of heaven should make us even rejoice with trembling. It was a daring prayer offered by Augustine, when he said, "Lord, hast thou declared that no man shall see thy face, and live?—then let me die that I may see thee!"

This is the sanctuary of our hope, the harbour in which our souls cast anchor. A hope that reaches only to the life within this earthly court, and that never entereth into that within the veil, would be consistent only in a being born for earth alone, and in whose melancholy creed man can only be called

> "The pilgrim of a day,
> Spouse of the worm, and brother of the clay;
> Frail as the leaf in autumn's yellow bower,
> Dust in the wind, or dew upon the flower;
> A friendless slave, a child without a sire,
> Whose mortal life and momentary fire
> Light to the grave his chance-created form,
> As ocean-wrecks illuminate the storm;
> And when the gale's tremendous force is o'er,
> To night and silence sink for evermore!"

III. Our hope, entering within the veil, depends on the life of Jesus there. "WHITHER THE FORERUNNER IS FOR US ENTERED, EVEN JESUS."

The forerunner of the ancient ship was the *Anchorarius*, the man who had charge of the anchor, and who carried it within the harbour, when there was not yet water sufficient to float the ship into it. In a spiritual sense, the forerunner of the worshipping Israelites was the high priest, who, taking with him the symbols of sacrifice, entered within the veil on their behalf. The Jews had the highest expectations from his ministry. They listened in terrified stillness for the silvery chime of the bells that hung upon the skirts of his garment. When "his sound was heard," they said, "He yet liveth to make intercession for us." "All their hopes depended on his life within the veil, and when at length he came forth alive, there was great joy, for they thought they were accepted." *

The forerunner of a band of pilgrims is one who precedes them to the place of destination, to give notice of their approach, to take possession in their name, and to prepare for their arrival.

From the study of these metaphors you will see,—

1. The sense in which Christ sustains the office

* Gemara, tit. Yoma, in Whitby.

of *forerunner* in relation to the millions who are hastening to the world of light within the veil. When He was last in their company as a man amongst men, and just at the point when He was about to become invisible to mortal eye, He said to the little band of tremblers around Him, who represented all the church of every age—"Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."* Having finished His work on earth, He ascended into His own glory, saying in effect, "I come, but I come not alone; I come at the head of an innumerable company—the armies of the redeemed from among men will soon be here. I take possession in their name; I write their names upon these joys, and riches, and royalties, and they shall inherit them for ever." And now we are permitted to say that He whose presence creates heaven is our Saviour. There is One within the veil who has worn our nature for more than eighteen hundred years. He was there, indeed, before; but not until His life on earth was accomplished, was He there in the nature of man, and as man's representative. He is the sovereign proprietor of *heaven;* He is the very glory of the place; yet He

* John xiv. 1, 2.

is there leading "not a life of glory only, but a life of office."* His perpetual presence there is the perpetual argument for our salvation. He is there to complete the removal of every impediment to the entrance of His followers; there as the sublime guarantee that we shall be there. Pure must those eyes be that gaze upon the throne of burning purity; pure the feet that walk the golden streets; pure those hands which strike the harps of praise. Only the new creature can sing the new song. A perfect harmony must be established between our life, and the glorified scene of our life, and He lives to effect that harmony. Mysterious influences are proceeding from His throne to our hearts, which change and charm us into a likeness to Himself, and a consequent fitness for His presence. "The glory of the Lord" changes us "into the same image, from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord."

2. You are also taught by these metaphors to see how entirely *your hope is identified with* faith. Faith and hope, though distinct, are vitally united. They come from the same source, are sustained by the same evidence, and are exercised on the same realities. Faith is the perceiving, hope the anticipating, faculty. Faith, looking through the glass of God's Word, says to the spirit, "I see

* Dr. John Owen.

heaven opened, and your Saviour enthroned amidst its central splendour." Hope says to it, "You are on your way to that glorious world; you will soon be there, for where He is, you must be." "Faith cometh by hearing; hope, by experience. Faith hath respect to the truth of the Word; hope, to its fulfilment. Faith lays hold of that end of the promise which is nearest to us, even in the Divine Book; hope, of that end of the promise which is fastened to the mercy-seat within the veil. Faith fights for doctrine; hope, for reward. Faith is founded on what is in the Bible; hope, on what is in heaven."*

Many a person will tell you that he hopes, only because he does not venture to say that he believes. Hope is thought to be something less decisive than faith; to imply a lower grade of Christian attainment, a weaker tone of spiritual life, or perhaps an uncertainty as to whether we feel even the first stirs and the faintest indications of that life. But hope, instead of involving less grace than faith, does, in reality, involve more. Faith—healthy faith—faith with a keen eye, a strong hand, and an unfaltering voice; faith that can say, "I know in whom I have believed, and who has the charge of my anchor;"—such faith as this must be in existence before you can have "a hope that maketh

* John Bunyan.

not ashamed." The motto of your hope must be:—

"Jesus in heaven;
Jesus in the heart;
Heaven in the heart;
The heart in heaven."*

IV. Our hope is an anchor of the soul which has peculiar recommendations. It is "BOTH SURE AND STEADFAST."

The term "sure" seems to refer to the *reliable nature* of the anchor itself. It is not constructed of doubtful materials; its cable will not snap in the tempest; no stress or strain upon it, and no resisting force will drag it from its anchorage. It is cast not into these lower deeps of time and death, but into those upper deeps of heaven; and it is, therefore, *sure*—sure as the grand solidities on which it fastens; sure as the "sure mercies of David;" sure as "the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;" sure as "the two immutable things whereby it is impossible for God to lie;" sure as omnipotence; sure as infinite love.

The term "steadfast" seems to refer to the *use* of the anchor. An anchor is that which keeps the ship steadfast. While waiting on this fluctuating sea of life, a hope in Christ will keep you safe amidst all peril, and fixed amidst all change.

* Bengel.

You will be steadfast in the *calms* of life. When the calm sea mirrors the clear heavens, and the waves dimple and undulate before the softest gale, the ship may be near the sunken reef or the sliding sand, and may, altogether, owe its safety to a sure anchor keeping it steadfast to its place. One moment might witness the appearance of gay security and the sound of happy voices; in the next there might be the shock, the rasp upon the shallows, the sinking down to death beneath the smiling daylight, and in the very sight of land. The records of spiritual history furnish evidence that the greatest trial is, apparently to have no trial, and that unbroken peace may be far more perilous than unbroken storm. When we cry "Peace, peace,"—when all seems to be well with us,—when we meet with few checks, few disapointments, and few stormy days, what shall prevent us drifting out of our safe position, and how shall we be preserved from making shipwreck of our faith? There is but one security, and that is "a hope that entereth within the veil." Amidst all brightness here, hope for something brighter there; amidst all earthly good, hope for a better and enduring substance; "set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of *God;*" and through the powers of the world to *come, earth* will be disenchanted, the spirit will

be kept upon its guard, and your faith will be "steadfast" to the end.

You will be steadfast amidst the *storms* of life. Imagination can paint nothing more terrific than a storm at sea. Only the sailor fully understands the meaning of the word. Only amidst blinding fire and flying spray, and the voice of many waters, as they break upon the vessel in the thunder of their power, and when there is nothing but a quivering plank between you and eternity, can you learn the helpless insignificance of man before a storm. Yet the image of a storm fitly represents some of the trials incident to the spiritual life. There are storms of care, storms of conscience, storms of temptation; and all thoughtful natures know that the wildest storms that ever rage are those which are felt within, to which there are no human witnesses, and which sometimes spend their fury when all without seems placid and delightful. What deep Christian thinker has not sometime been nearly overwhelmed in waves of mental perplexity? what lonely wrestler in prayer is there who has not sometimes cried, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and billows are gone over me?" But if in such hours of dark tempest we can retain the conviction, however faint, that He who *presides amidst the* glories of heaven is our own

Redeemer, that He still holds us with His mighty power and will not let us go, we shall survive the crisis; our ship, shattered though it be, will never founder; in the very rush and agony of waters we shall patiently hope on, and hope in Christ will be "an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast."

If we would not perish in the treacherous sea on which we are now passing our existence; if we would not have its storms to take us by surprise and leave us in despair, our faith must, without delay, take firm hold of an unseen Saviour. He alone can keep us through all the extremity of our danger. Heaven itself would not be a sanctuary of our hope, if He were not there. "To the refuge! to the refuge!" was the sentence inscribed on the direction-posts which were placed by all the roads leading to the ancient cities of refuge, and inscribed in characters so broad and distinct that the breathless fugitive could read them as he rushed along. "To the refuge! to the refuge!" is the one direction which the Gospel gives to the bewildered spirit of the sinner as it points him to Christ, and the direction is so distinct that "he who runs may read it." It is clear as the rainbow on the storm-cloud, clear as the sun in the heavens. We can only mistake the meaning of the sentence, and miss the *way* which it indicates, through the beclouding *powers of sin*. We may, if we will, understand

all the the import, and feel all the joyful inspiration of the words: "We have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope which is set before us:" which hope "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

The Tempted High Priest.

"Saviour, when in dust to thee
Low we bow the adoring knee;
When, repentant, to the skies
Scarce we lift our weeping eyes;
Oh! by all thy pains and woe,
Suffered once for man below,
Bending from thy throne on high,
Hear our solemn litany.

"By thy helpless infant years,
By thy life of want and tears,
By thy day of sore distress
In the savage wilderness,
By the dread mysterious hour
Of the insulting tempter's power;
Turn, O turn a favouring eye,
Hear our solemn litany."

"He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."—HEBREWS iv. 15.

TO be tempted, is to be tested. Trial may be wrought by good or evil agency, for good or evil purposes. "The *Lord* did tempt Abraham." "*Satan* stood up against Israel," and tempted David to number the people. In the one case, the object was to establish faith; in the other, to *subvert it:* but in both cases there was trial. *Perhaps the* word, as employed in the text, is used

in its most comprehensive sense, and there may be no intention to indicate the kind of trial to which our High Priest was subjected, or to limit our thoughts only to those testing processes which were Divine, or only to those which were Satanic. We know, however, that he endured both kinds: and in taking for our present subject the Temptations of the Saviour, our thoughts will be chiefly directed to those which He suffered from the agency of the Fallen Spirit. From this source "He was in all points tempted ss we are, yet without sin." Let us, then, with reverence and child-like simplicity, first, think over what is here asserted respecting our Saviour's temptations; and, secondly, endeavour to ascertain the design of these temptations.

I. WE HAVE TO STUDY THE APOSTLE'S ASSERTION.

1. "He was *tempted*." "*God* is not tempted of evil; but the *Saviour* was. It is obvious that temptation can be a possibility only to a created spirit, and is only likely to be the lot even of such a spirit in a low and early stage of its existence. On this account, the Hebrews felt the idea of a tempted Saviour to be one most discordant to their tastes, repulsive to their pride, and at variance with all the impressions they had received from *their national religion*. It was difficult for them

to conceive that a religion so solemn with the rime of antiquity, and so rich with the light of ceremonial splendour, ushered into existence with such stupendous wonders, and proclaimed with such joyful strains of inspiration, could be consummated in the appearance of a weak and tempted mortal. The Hebrews, to whom Paul addressed this epistle, shared, to some extent, these feelings, for old prejudices lingered along with their new principles. Many of them, it is probable, had been converted on the day of Pentecost; but though the work then wrought within them was Divine, it was connected with much that was only human. The power of sympathy, and the electric stroke of solemn surprise, had brought into play many merely natural emotions, which they mistook at the time for spiritual effects; and when these emotions cooled down, and only a faint and almost secret spark of grace was left, they felt the returning force of their former prejudices; they began to look wistfully back on the system they had renounced, and some of them half thought their new decision had been premature. If the Messiah had come forth from the secrecies of uncreated light to tread the trembling stage of the creation, clothed with the robes of His Imperial Majesty, and "travelling in *the greatness* of His strength;" if He had come *like some* celestial Maccabeus, to awe the world

into subjection by the stroke of some majestic miracle—an earthly king, yet free from earthly weakness, in sceptred state and visual glory, yet in dread reserve, the reserve arising from His strange and unknown nature; or if the Holy One of Israel had appeared as He did to the elders, when there was under His feet a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were, the body of heaven in His clearness:* or if He had made the mercy-seat His throne, and shone forth there—"the Light in human limbs arrayed:" if He had proclaimed His Gospel in tones like those which of old rang like the trumpet of the storm across the crowd of worshippers gathered at the base of Sinai, when He proclaimed His law—all this would to them have seemed perfectly natural and right; but they were confounded to think that their Messiah could be a poor, scorned, wandering, tempted man. The quiet informality and mean conditions of His advent gave a shock to their faith, and although in the first effervescence of their feelings they had embraced Him as their Lord, there were moments now, when they were ready to say, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" But Paul in this letter, which was written for the very purpose of confirming their faith, makes no attempt to soften or qualify

* Exodus xxiv 10.

that truth which so much tried it; he only pictures it with a more distinct relief, and proclaims it with a more certain sound—although he advances considerations which prove that what seemed to be the shame of the Gospel was its glory, and that what seemed to be its weakness was one of the secrets of its power. He reiterates the statement that Christ was in reality tempted.

2. Yes, not only was He tempted, but the apostle adds, He was tempted *in all points like as we are.* From the nature of the case, this phrase, comprehensive as it is, must be understood with a certain limitation. It may, perhaps, be understood as having reference simply to what was outward and instrumental. To borrow a convenient though much abused term, He was tempted in all points *objectively* as we are. He was tempted by all the powers, all the arts, all the devices, and all the instruments which are brought to bear upon us.

We know, for instance, that Satan sometimes tempts us by direct suggestions. Sometimes, when we have dark thoughts, they shoot direct from his dark spirit; when we have thoughts which strike upon the soul like fiery darts, they are his fiery darts; when we have thoughts which grieve us, because they seem the unlawful whispers *of our own* mind, they are his whispers; they *originate not* in us, but in him. Though there

can be the touch of no Ithuriel's spear to detect his presence close at the side of the soul, he is there: when we have thoughts sudden, unaccountable, unholy, raised by no outward object, linked by no associating law—they are the blazing and destructive missiles thrown over the walls of the city of Mansoul by the besieging foe. Christ was in all *these* points tempted like as we are.

We know, also, that at other times, and perhaps, most frequently, Satanic temptations reach us by intermediate and instrumental agencies. He is mysteriously permitted to use the whole world of organised existence as a mighty apparatus of temptation. He is in secret, behind the shrouds of visible nature, fingering hidden springs, working evil machineries, applying subtle forces, so as to tempt us by sights, by sounds, by touches, and by endless appeals to human frailty. There is scarcely an external thing that may not be plied as one of the "snares of the fowler." Christian! "his busy hands do plant"—

> "Snares in thy substance; snares attend thy want;
> Snares in thy credit; snares in thy disgrace;
> Snares in thy high estate; snares in thy base;
> * * * * *
> Snares in thy quiet; snares in thy commotion;
> Snares in thy diet; snares in thy devotion;
> Snares are above thy head, and snares beneath;
> Snares in thy sickness; snares are in thy death."*

* Quarles.

These are not evils which only have existence in the flights of quaint fancy, or pictorial rhetoric, or superstitious thought: the most sober and practical students of human nature and its perils, confess their real existence, and allow their universal operation; and in all *these* points Christ was "tempted like as we are." Are we tempted through the senses? So was He. Are we tempted by opportunities of carnal honour and carnal power? So was He. Are we tempted through our human affections? So was He. Are we tempted to deflection from the path of obedience by the infirmities of the good, or the crafty questioning of the worldly wise? So was He. Every testing process to which we are subjected, He went through. Satan omitted no conceivable mode, and withheld no possible intensity of trial from the holy soul of Immanuel. All the magic prospects and all the soothing illusions that externalism could give, all its joyful or mournful influences, all its power of tenderness or terror, he employed to enchant or assail the Son of Man. So He was tempted in all points as we are, as to the instruments of temptation, though He had not all our susceptibilities to their touch. In all points in which He could innocently, He did actually resemble us: He was *ever* tempted as we are, though ever victorious as *we are not.*

3. When the sacred writer has said of Jesus, "He was in all points tempted as we are," he adds the remarkable qualification—"*yet without sin.*" That is, the tempter found Him without sin, and left Him without sin. It was perfect holiness that walked the earth in the form of Jesus Christ. After the most intense trial of holy principle, He could make the declaration—"The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Of all the millions who have passed through the experiences of mortality, He was the only one, who, without inconsideration or extravagance, could have said—"Bear witness earth and heaven, spirits of darkness, and spirits of light—temptation has spent all its force upon me, and yet I am without sin!"

This is a statement which, when realised, is likely to ruffle the mind with surprise, or rack it with perplexity. We are ready to think that, if we were without sin, temptation would only be a name and not a reality, and that there would then be "no enchantment against Jacob, and no divination against Israel." "What," you exclaim, "what had temptation to work upon in the mind of Jesus, and how could He be tempted to sin if He had no sympathy with sin? Temptation would fall on such a mind, not like a spark on explosive elements, but like a spark on water—*there would be no trial*, no danger, no felt effect!"

But we shall find, on more careful thought, that the only thing which is absolutely essential to create susceptibility to temptation, is *weakness*. To use the words of John Owen, "Sin is not that to which Satanic temptation of necessity *appeals*, but only that at which it *aims*." It only necessarily appeals to weakness; all creatures in themselves are weak, and let but the creature in his weakness be seduced into the indulgence of some lawful desire, in an unlawful degree, or in forbidden circumstances, there is *sin*—the first step is taken in that road which leads away from God, and he has crossed the awful boundary-line that divides the sinless from the fallen state!

Fallen angels were sinless once. Lapsed, lost, low as they now are, when in the "dew of their youth" they were peers of heaven; they sang its songs; they plucked its amaranth; they drank its tranquil bliss; they loved its King, and served Him like the sunbeam with unpolluted brightness and undiverted course; but at length temptation entered their sublime abode, we know not when—we know not how—we only know that it could not have appealed to their sinfulness, for they were without sin; it only appealed to their weakness, overpowered it, and then these "sons of the *morning*" fell.

Fallen man was once the sinless inhabitant of

Paradise; but while as yet he had a spirit pure as the breeze that had rifled the fragrance of the young world's flowers, and fair as the star when it trembles into light—a memory that had never mirrored a contaminating image—and a heart that had never felt one tremor of sinful disturbance—an appeal was made to his weakness; he yielded to it—he fell, and, in his fall, fell all mankind.

But to come into a homelier region of illustration. Imagine a father, in some dreary days of poverty, having the chance of taking, undetected, gold belonging to another man. He is without the sin of dishonesty, but the thought of his starving child, and the possibility, by this one secret act, of saving it from death, will surely be a real trial; and though he shakes off the thought like fire, though he would not for the universe take the bait which the tempter had flung in his way, does he not feel the temptation?

Imagine some saint, sentenced to perish at the stake for Christ. The authorities say, "Recant and live, or confess and die!" He is without the sin of spiritual disloyalty, but as he looks through the prison-bars on the green of the spring, and the blue glory of the sky, as he feels the whiff of morning air "touch with transport all the springs of life;" as, in contrast to all this, comes the *thought, that if* he should be constant to his

Saviour he must shiver in the shaded cell through months of weariness, and only be brought forth at last into the glare of day to die; to die in fire, to die amidst a cruel crowd, and leave his little ones like lambs in the midst of wolves; although he may say, "O Jesus, though all men should deny thee, yet will not I;"—do not all these things combine to make that offer of dear life a temptation hard to overcome?

It is, therefore, conceivable that although Christ was without sin, He was not without the susceptibility of being tempted. He appropriated our nature with all its weakness. He had the human love of rest, and though his days were spent in toil, and his nights in prayer, was there no temptation to seek the luxury of listlessness? He had the human sense of shame, and when that lit his cheek with burning suffusions, and drew from his lips the cry, "Come ye out against me as against a thief, with swords and with staves!" was there no temptation to resentment? He felt unfairness and injustice as we do, and when despised and rejected of men, was there no temptation to leave sin to its sorrow, and folly to its fate? Was it easy to pursue on their behalf His meek and beneficent way, or was it without an effort that He *restrained* that power which might have made *them in a* moment dumb with consternation or

pale in death? He had the human thirst for happiness, the human fear of death, and all the delicacies of our human organisation; when, therefore, the tempter drew across it his deadly magnetic passes, when pain struck the nerves in all their tense and trembling strings, when in the hour of darkness He was about to take the cup of wrath for us, was there no temptation to give way? He was sinless, it is true; but having all the properties of our nature, keenly sensitive and symmetrically complete, His course from first to last was one of dire temptation. Though He never yielded, with reverence be it spoken, it was a trial not to yield; though He never fell, it was an agony not to fall; though He was the spotless Lord Jesus, His holiness maintained its existence in conflict, not in calm. Many a time there was the concentration of all its strength in a single bound to withstand the stern assault, and dash back the charging hosts of hell; and thus it was that temptation left Him as it found Him, "without sin."

II. Let us now, with profound reverence, endeavour to ascertain THE ENDS OF THE SAVIOUR'S TEMPTATIONS.

1. He was tempted that He might be perfected. *But some will ask,* "Was He not perfect already?"

To meet this question, as well as to form some faint conceptions of the truth now before us, let us call to mind what the Scriptures assert respecting the wonderful peculiarity of His nature. It is their plain declaration that He was God. It is equally their plain declaration that He was man. In Him, the human and the Divine did not mingle and interpenetrate, so as to form a human deity, or a deified humanity. As He was God, and not merely the shadow of God, He was man, and not the shadow of man. He was strictly and absolutely human, as we are human; He had a real human body, and a real human soul; He kept His supreme glories in abeyance by a royal act of power; "He emptied Himself," and became the brother of our fallen race.

The Divine nature could not be perfected; that, indeed, *was* perfect already, for that which is not always perfect is not always God.

But human nature is born weak and undeveloped; it has to grow in mind and in body; one of its essential laws is its capability of improvement. Thus it was that even Jesus had to be educated. He did not start into full stature in the flash of a moment; "perfection was not struck out at a beat by the instantaneous omnipotence of miracle;" *but in His* case, as in ours, there was a gradual *increase of* knowledge, and a gradual heighten-

ment of character. To question if He could have been thus perfected, stage by stage, would be to question if He was human; for if Christ has not gone through this process, then the only reality of His nature is the Divine. But why should we feel inclined to question it? "It may seem a derogation to the dignity of Christ, to suppose Him capable of advancement. But you will remember that all these reasonings apply only to the inferior nature, to that nature in which every humiliating characteristic is but a new testimony to the boundless love that brought its Creator to assume it. It is no more an impeachment to the dignity of Christ, that, as a man, He should be capable of improvement, than that, as a man, He should not be infinite." *

True, the Saviour was always perfect even as to His human nature, but perfection is a relative thing; the perfection of a child is something lower than the perfection of a man—as negative excellence differs from positive excellence; and as the perfect bud is inferior to "the bright consummate flower." Therefore, although the child Jesus was "without sin," "He increased in wisdom and in stature, and grew in favour with God and man." Though He always obeyed perfectly, He obeyed increasingly, with that increasing discipline of

* Dr. Butler

will, and that increasing knowledge, which came to Him, as it must to us, through trials; and He *learned* obedience by the things which He suffered.

"Cloistered and unexercised virtues," if faultless, are feeble; and in this instance, as in every other, human nature had to be educated by difficulties, and to acquire strength by wrestling with opposing strength. Bearing our nature through the fires of trial, He advanced it from the perfection of infancy to the perfection of maturity; stage after stage He carried it on, from the simple purity of original innocence, to purity of the deepest, noblest, most victorious force; and when its highest possibilities of holy development were reached, He offered it on the altar as a sacrifice without spot or blemish. "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of our Salvation perfect through sufferings."

2. He was tempted, *that He might destroy the dominion of the Tempter.* How this dominion arose on earth, is one of the darkest secrets in the moral government of God. Leaving its causes, Revelation only condescends to tell us some of the merely outward facts of its origin and history. The fallen seraph seduced the dwellers of Eden from their *loyalty.* The first man having sinned, all the race *inherited from* him a vitiated nature, which brought

them under his power as their "Destroyer." All the kingdoms of the earth, and all the glory thereof, seemed given over to him. He became their "prince," their "god," the "spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." Art, with its magic; music, with its mysterious secrets; poetry, with its sublime conceptions; power, wealth, even the religious instincts, and everything influential, seemed to be under his mastery, to be employed by him to maintain his treason and confirm his throne. Even in the earliest ages, however, the tribes of the true Israel, by the grace of God, escaped from his thraldom, and received forgiving mercy and sustaining strength, through the anticipated efficacy of a work that was to be wrought in the fulness of time, by a nameless One, who should "bruise the head of the serpent," and restore over earth the supremacy of God. The tempter looked forward to a day when he should encounter this Champion of Man, and, in His individual defeat, overthrow the cause of the race.

All remember a scene in sacred story so unlike everything that we ourselves have witnessed, that it looks as if it belonged only to the regions of old romance, and not to the real world. There is a battle-field; on one side are ranged the tents of Israel, on the other the bannered lines of Philistia. *From these lines* forth stalks a giant; and while

his gleaming armour, and towering form, and tread that shakes the earth, seems to fix every witness with terrified fascination, he thunders out the cry, "Am not I a Philistine? I defy the armies of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together!"

There is a deadly, sickening pause, and then an unarmed youth, from the sheep-folds of Bethlehem, steps into the arena, and accepts the challenge in the name of the Most High God.

Every friend is filled with consternation, every foe with fierce delight. But nerved with preternatural strength, and guided by a secret impulse from above, he flings but a stone—it flies straight to its mark, the giant falls, and Israel, through this single hero, wins the victory.

If we feel inclined to censure the feverish fancies of those elder writers who find in this transaction a plain type of Christ's combat with the Prince of Darkness, we may, at least, be permitted to employ it as an illustration. When the giant power of wickedness was in possession of the ground, the mystical David, the despised and feeble-looking brother of the imperilled tribes, overthrew him single-handed. He came alone, and "of the people there was none with Him." *He came not* to close in a conflict which had only *a private interest*, and the results of which ter-

minated simply in himself; but in a representative capacity, as champion of the armies of the living God he came; and "for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the Devil." With all the strength of desperation, and all the fury of "immortal hate," —with all the venom of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never can be quenched—the adversary came forth to meet him. If by subtle stratagem, or fierce assault, he could but have tempted the Saviour to a single false step, or the slightest deviation from obedience, He would have been a Saviour no longer; the perfection, and therefore the efficacy of His righteousness, of His example, and of His atonement, would have been destroyed, and all whom He represented must have perished. If he could but have scared Him back from the altar of sacrifice, or have induced Him to resign His work, "wearied in the greatness of His way," their cause would have been lost for ever. But all was unavailing. Our David was victorious, and, tribes of Israel, that victory was ours! "He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them" by His cross. Though the adversary lives, his power has received its death-stroke; though his armies are still in the field, they are in flight; "*God hath numbered* his kingdom and finished it."

3. He was tempted, that His peculiar and characteristic experience of temptation *might lead His followers also to expect the same.* The path trod by the great Leader must, of course, be traversed by His followers, and His characteristic experience is likely to be theirs. If we follow one whose career was greeted with smiles, and cheered with acclamations, whose path was bright with sunshine, strewed with flowers, and musical with joy, we may indulge in expectations of similar felicity; but if He is a king whose sceptre was a reed, whose robe was a mantle of mockery, whose crown was the wreath of ragged thorns, and whose throne was the cross; if, from Jordan to Gethsemane, His life was one course of temptations, through the secret agency or the human instruments of diabolic power, we must prepare for like mournful experiences and like moral hazards ourselves, for if even Christ was not spared, how can we expect exemption? "The servant is not greater than his lord;" and if Satan made all His life a tempted life, why should he retire from your presence, or at the beck of your feeble finger lay his baneful activities to sleep.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Expect temptation, then, and the foe that is expected is *already* half defeated. Expect it in what men *would think* the most unlikely scenes and seasons.

Expect it in the secrecy of pensive meditation, as well as amidst the crashing dissonance of a crowded life; expect it when you are happy, for it assailed the first Adam in Paradise; expect it when you are sad, for it haunted the second Adam in a wilderness; expect it from the outset of the pilgrimage to its solemn close. The archers from the enemy's castle may seek to terrify you back when you are knocking at the gate at "the head of the way;" and his fiery shafts may kindle upon you, when at the last you stand before the "gates of pearl." If you would not be surprised through the ambuscades of temptation, nor overpowered by its sudden force, nor sink disconsolate beneath its gloom, be always expecting the next attack, always guarded and alert, always recollecting that you are the tempted followers of a tempted Lord, and that in your case, as in His, the suffering must precede the reign. "No pain, no palm; no thorn, no throne; no gall, no glory; no cross, no crown."*

4. He was tempted, *that He might teach us by His example how to meet and sustain temptation.* Christ is our exempler as well as our atoner; through His Spirit we are to be the reflections of His peerless beauty; and He was in all points tempted as we are, that when placed in similar circumstances we may in all points live as He

* William Penn.

lived. In our temptation we are to study His, for the manner in which it should be met, and the spirit in which it should be borne.

The example of Christ, however, should be studied in a thoughtful and discriminating way; we should carefully distinguish between what He did simply as a man, and what He did in His official service as a Saviour. Many things which He did, would not be safe or right for us to do; and it is rather the spirit of His life, than every individual action in it, that we are to make our model. For instance, some of us would be overcome if we habitually frequented the circles of those who would certainly seek "to entangle us in our talk," and would "ask hard questions," "tempting us;" some would be tempted above their capacity of endurance, if they daily ventured into debate with those modern Sadducees, "who believe in neither angel nor spirit." Others would be in danger if, whenever invited, "they sat at meat with publicans and sinners." Christ did all these things, for they entered into the faithful performance of His mission, as the seeker and Saviour of the lost.

But while He always confronted temptation when it was *needful*, He never challenged it when it was *needless*. He taught His disciples to say to *the Father*, "Lead us not into temptation;" He

charged them to watch and pray, lest they should enter into it; and His verbal instruction was sustained by His living example. In the very first recorded instance of His subjection to this kind of trial it is said, He was "led" not by the action of His own choice, but "*by the Spirit* into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil;" and in all subsequent instances you may trace the rule of the same principle. Saviour as He was, and therefore of necessity the frequenter of dangerous haunts,—holding as He did, though shrouded and repressed, the fires of omnipotence within Himself,—He never encountered the malignities of tempting power when the encounter could be righteously avoided. So that even in those most hazardous passages of His life, there is an example for us; and though we may not copy the letter, we may always copy the spirit. Look to Jesus, as He is manifested even there, and learn to avoid needless exposure to temptation. *You* carry about with you no talisman to keep you from the touch of harm; *you* have not the armour of innocence; *you* have not the reserved strength of a Divine nature; and yet you sometimes enter scenes from choice, which even the Saviour would only venture into when "led by the Spirit," or called by His office to exercise the ministries of mediatorial love. If *you dwell in the* jungle you are likely to take the

jungle fever. If you "dally with the crested worm," you are likely to be smitten by his deadly fang; and so, if you pitch your tent in Vanity Fair, you are likely to catch the vain spirit of the scene. If you go, from reckless daring, or from sheer indifference, to any "enchanted ground," you are likely to become the victim of the tempter, who is the evil genius of the place.

"To grapple with temptation is a venture, to fly from it is a victory."* Let us not be more daring than Christ. "He suffered, leaving us an example that we should tread in His steps;" and we do so, in one vital particular at least, when we keep as far from evil as we can: so that when evil comes, there may thrill upon our soul a sure conviction that a Divine hand leads us, a Divine presence watches us all the while we are exposed to it, and that as far as we are concerned, it is a trial not of man's seeking, but of God's sending.

But though, perhaps, this feature in the example of our tempted Lord is, to weak and fallen souls, the very first in practical importance, it does not comprehend the whole of the model which is placed before us. If we were to try to give the whole in a few words, we might say that the spirit of Jesus—the right spirit with regard to temptation—is, the spirit that will only enter it when led

* South.

by God; the spirit of devotion, which will seek to be fortified, if need be, by a night in the mountain against the perils of a day with the multitude; the spirit of labour, whose constant activities of love will give no "place" to the tempter; the spirit which arms itself with the Word of God, is imbued with the element of Scripture, and is always ready with something that is "written," to silence the suggestions of the foe. No magic of our own can call up this spirit; but beholding, as in a glass, the glorious life of the only one who ever conquered Satan in His own strength, we shall be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord."

5. He was tempted, *to afford His tempted people the assurance of His sympathy.* Even under ordinary circumstances we yearn for sympathy. Without it, the heart will contract and droop, and shut like a flower in an unkindly atmosphere, but will open again amidst the sounds of frankness and the scenes of love. When we are in trouble, this want is in proportion still more pressing; and for the sorrowful heart to feel alone, is a grief greater than nature can sustain. A glance of sympathy seems to help it more than the gift of untold riches; and a loving look, even from the little child who is sorry for us, or a single word from some homely friend, will sometimes brace the spirit to new

exertions, and seem almost to waken life within the grasp of death. But sympathy with the sorrowful can only be fully learnt in the holy school of sorrow. Only the mourner can understand the heart of a mourner; only the exile the heart of an exile. Hence the Latin poet makes Dido say to Æneas and his companions:—

> "For I myself, like you, have been distressed,
> Till heaven afforded me this place of rest;
> And *touched with miseries* myself have known,
> I view with pity woes so like my own." *

We who are tempted have this consolation heightened to the highest degree,—"For we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." But, perhaps, the words "*without sin*" may suggest some misgivings in the mourning heart, and prompt it to ask,—"Does not this qualification interfere with the completeness of the Saviour's sympathy, by destroying all similarity between His temptation and ours, and showing His to have been a mysterious life, altogether unlike our own?" Let it be remembered that it is *suffering*, and not necessarily similarity in other respects, that gives the power of sympathy. And did not Jesus "*suffer*, being tempted?" Verily He did; and arising out of the

* Æn. I. 628.

very fact that He was "without sin," He had an exquisitely strong susceptibility to suffering from the atmosphere of sin around Him, which is not only beyond the experience, but beyond the comprehension of the most tender-hearted mortal. Sin tends to dim the sense of sin's inherent repulsiveness—to "harden all the heart, and petrify the feeling." But an infinitely holy nature, brought in contact with sin by temptation, must have passed through depths of shame and sorrow that we, the sinful, can never sound. "Wherefore, in all things, it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

When, therefore, "the archers have sorely grieved you," and you fly from your companions because they all seem to have turned strangers—when tired of their dead politeness, or their harsh reproval, your bruised spirit seeks the deepest silence and the softest shade, remember Jesus, for He is there to meet you—there to heal you with a human, yet with an *infinitely* human, sympathy. When men are farthest, He is nearest; and if you do but open your hearts to Him, thoroughly give *Him your confidence*, and cherish that subtle

intuition of His presence which faith awakens, and which sanctified affliction helps the spirit to preceive, you will have a blessed visitation like that of which the poet speaks:—

"There was I met by One, who had Himself
Been hurt by th' archers: in His side He bore,
And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars;
With gentle force, soliciting the task,
He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live."

6. He was tempted, *that we might be encouraged to boldness in prayer for help.* "Let us, therefore, come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." This is our grand encouragement; and to convey this meaning is the final purpose of the text. The dispensation of help is lodged in the hands of Jesus. We may infer, therefore, with what wisdom, delicacy, and promptitude it will be brought to us when we seek it. Sometimes, even when we forget to seek it—when in the depths of our dumb, blind misery we know not how to pray—it will come; all the sympathy of His heart will flow out unsolicited, and we may receive quick relief. But how much more certainly will it come when we ask for it! A High Priest, who was tempted in all points like as we are, is a mediatorial *arrangement, made for the very purpose of arousing us to pray.* When it is said in one place that

"He is able to *succour* them that are tempted;" and again asserted here, that He is ready to afford "*help* in time of need," the original word has a fine tint of meaning that is almost lost in our translation. It conveys the idea of relief given by one who *runs up at a cry for help;**—such help as came to Ishmael dying in the desert, when "the Lord heard the voice of the lad;"—such help as came when the wail of the infant from the ark of bulrushes brought the Egyptian princess to its side;—such help as that which the good Samaritan gave when he heard the low moan from the depths of the desolate road, and ran to see the cause, and found and saved the wounded traveller. You may be in trouble which bereaves you of the power of consecutive thought, you may be unable to utter the sentences of verbal prayer, but you can always cry for help, and such a cry will always bring the kind of help which this word describes. Reverently, humbly, yet boldly, cry to the blessed Lord for help; out of the depths cry unto Him; say, "Bow down thine ear to me, deliver me speedily. Pull me out of the net (of temptation) which they have laid privily for me, for thou art my strength." "By the mystery of thy holy incarnation; by thy holy nativity and circumcision; by thy baptism, fasting, and temptation, good Lord deliver me;"

* Εἰς εὔκαιρον βοήθειαν.

and your prayer will, in due time, be turned into praise. You will be able at length to say, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings; and He hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God. Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

The Causes of Unsuccessful Prayer.

"Poor heart, lament.
For since thy God refuseth still,
There is some rub, some discontent,
Which cools His will.

"Thy Father could
Quickly effect what thou dost move;
For He is Power: and sure He would;
For he is Love.

"Go search this thing.
Tumble thy breast and turn thy book:
If thou hadst lost a glove or ring,
Wouldst thou not look?"

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."—JAMES iv. 3.

"ASK, and ye shall receive," said Jesus Christ to His disciples. How is it, then, that we so frequently "ask and receive *not?*" and that millions of prayers seem to have been lost between earth and heaven? There are some questions, the discussion of which we can leave for the long leisure of immortality, but this is one of immediate urgency. It sometime agitates us to the centre of the soul, and almost shakes the foundations of

our faith. Who is ready with an explanation that will set our hearts at rest?

"You ask, and receive not," some one will answer, because prayer was not so much intended as the medium for obtaining gifts, as an exercise for improving the spiritual health. It is to work a re-actionary benefit—a benefit from within rather than from without. It is appointed mainly that the soul may be stronger by wrestling with the "Angel of the Presence," and holier by intercourse with the Infinite beauty. But this is equivalent to the entire denial and abandonment of all real prayer, for it makes the suppliant a suppliant in form only—a mere experimentalist on himself, and not the seeker of favours from God. We feel this to be treacherous reasoning, a mere mocking semblance of soothing advice. We shall be unable to listen to it for one moment, unless, in some "hour of darkness," the Evil Spirit has persuaded us to surrender the privilege of prayer entirely and for ever!

"Ye ask, and receive not," says another, because you have been asking for certain forms of physical good; and although prayer may be an appointed medium for obtaining spiritual blessings, you are not authorised to expect, in answer to it, blessings that are merely temporal. You ask for health, and *still you* are smitten with disease; you ask that

"the desire of your eyes" may be spared, and yet it is "taken away with a stroke;" you ask for sufficiency, and yet you pine in want. You ask at some time of national mourning that God may arrest the march of pestilence, or still the storm of war, and yet these evils hold on their way, because the physical laws of the universe are fixed. Since the age of miracles they have been the servants of man, not by their suspension, but by their regular course; and, indeed, how is it possible for "the wheels of nature" to roll in a new direction, or any of her grand laws to suffer change, in order to secure to some obscure petitioner some merely evanescent good!

> "Think we, like some weak prince, the Eternal Cause
> Prone for His favourites to reverse His laws?
> Shall burning Etna, if a sage requires,
> Forget her thunder and recall her fires?
> When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
> Shall gravitation cease if you go by?"

To this we may at least reply, that if sometimes prayers of this class could not be answered without the intervention of a miracle, which to expect would only be presumption, a miracle would not be always needful in order to their success. For instance, when I pass the loose mountain that "trembles from on high," and pray that I may pass with safety, it may not be absolutely needful *that gravitation* should cease, in order that my

prayer may be answered. A sudden impulse may be imparted, a quickening thought infused by the Divine Spirit, which may have the effect of making me linger on my way till the threatening fragment falls, or hurry forward before it rushes down; or else the mighty mass, which might have crushed me, may, without a miracle, only arch me over.* If it be indeed a natural impossibility for some of these prayers for merely natural blessings to be answered, obviously this need not be the case with regard to all, or with regard to most of them. The greater number of instances in which prayer is unsuccessful, even in this limited department of its exercise, is not, therefore, accounted for by this suggestion.

Another will say, "you ask, and receive not," because everything in the sphere of spiritual as well as of natural things is already settled by the decree of the Sovereign Spirit. But even the harshest theories respecting the Divine decrees, need not of necessity induce that fatalistic apathy which deems it of no use to pray. If all results are rigidly decreed, why not all processes? If He who has decreed that the shower shall fall, has also decreed that the vapour shall first ascend—if He who has decreed that the harvest shall spring,

* *A friend of* the writer once heard Richard Watson employ this illustration, *but he is uncertain* whether it is to be found in his published works.

has also decreed that the seed shall first be sown —what difficulty have we in understanding that He who has decreed that certain events shall take place, has decreed that they shall take place through prayer? Want of success in prayer is not to be explained by any argument drawn from the Divine decrees.

But now there rises before us one who can speak with authority. The spirit of the first pastor of the first church is here, and uttering the wisdom, not of experience only, but also of inspiration, he says:—

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." —James iv. 3.

"Asking amiss," then, is the grand cause of our failure. Let us inquire, when this is the case in our petitions.

1. We ask amiss, and consequently without success, *when we fail to feel the parental love of God.* I say parental, rather than paternal, because this expression includes the idea both of fatherhood and motherhood. When we are invited to call God, Father, the term must of necessity be understood in an original and peculiar sense—a sense in which it can apply to no being besides. Applied to him, the word Father stands for both father and mother. It means, the infinite utter- *most of all* parental relationship; the perfection

both of masculine and feminine capacity and tenderness. As the object of a *father's* care—"as one whom his *mother* comforteth," each Christian stands related to his God. The human parent is the type of the Divine. Christian! who is it to whom you were always *individually* precious, when all other persons regarded you as a human being and nothing more;—one of the uncounted, undistinguished units, that could be only cared for in a general way, as belonging to the human race? So individually precious are you to God. Who gave you being, who fed you, clothed you, and taught you in all your years of helplessness? Who was it to whom you told every secret, ran in every strait; to whom you flew back with joyous rush and delicious affection after every little interval of parting? Who always felt interest in everything that interested you,—your lessons, your sports, and all the April changes of shower and sunshine that chequered the spring-time of your days? God is all that to you, and all that infinitely. Call to mind that day in your infant history when, disobeying a parent's law, you wandered away from home and got lost. While the sunshine could light you to the home of the flowers, and the abode of all the grotesque and beautiful things that *haunted* the green field or the grand old wood, you *still wan*dered on delighted; but when night came

on, and the storm-wind moaned amongst the trees, what could you do but cry out the name that first came glowing to your heart? And who ran up at that cry—who was it that was already out to seek and to save that which was lost—and to carry you home rejoicing? God is all that to you. When your soul was lost, He sought it; when it was found, He "rejoiced over it with singing." But you have not felt the reality of all this; and although some of you are versed in the terms of theological dispute, you have not yet learned, with all your heart, the two first words of the Lord's Prayer—"Our Father." Your approaches to the mercy-seat have been visits of ceremony, rather than affection;—your prayers have been elaborations of language, rather than bursts of strong desire. Cold reserve has taken the place of open-hearted confidence; and you have often said only what you thought you ought to feel, instead of saying what you really felt, and asking for what you really wanted. From a sense of duty, but with a turbulent heart, you have often prayed for China or Japan, when you have said nothing of things in the very next room, which were all the while fretting your temper and turning your prayer into sin. Perhaps, from peculiarity of temperament, you could bear the loss of a fortune like a hero, while the blunder *of a servant will* surprise you into emotion, before

which your nobler principles drift helpless as a wreck before a storm. Yet, though you would pray over the one trouble, you do not pray over the other. You have confided your great sorrows to God, but you have kept the thrilling stings and fine vexations of life all to yourself. You ask for things great in themselves, but you ask not for help under those trials which, though little in themselves, are great to you. You have treated God as a stranger. You have not confided to Him your secrets. You have not even told Him so much as you have told your father or mother. You have not trusted His mighty love. That name —which ought to have been a Divine talisman to "unlock the clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell" of earthliness; to melt your pride, unseal your lips, and enchant you into confidence —has been to you a name almost without a meaning, and you have not believed Him who has said, "Call me Father." God is grieved by the reserves and suspicions of His child. He will receive no ceremonial visits, hear no ceremonial prayers; hence your prayers have often been lost, they have only been as sounds dying in the air, and after they left your lips you have heard of them no more.

2. We ask amiss if, in our prayers, *we fail to realise the mediation of Christ.*

Though children, we are rebels; and there is no

rebel so sinful as a rebel *child*. The rebellion of Absalom was all the greater because he was the king's son; and ours must be regarded as peculiarly great, on the same principle. We have forfeited the original rights of children, and can approach God no more directly, but only mediately. While unfallen spirits may still enter the presence of the Divine majesty in their own name, we can only come in the name of Him who died for us. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," says Jesus. "No man cometh to the Father, but by me." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will He do." "Through Him we have access by one Spirit to the Father." And now the Lord, who is not only our Father but our "Lawgiver," has given forth this declaration to man, by all the voices of His heralds and all the manifestoes of His empire: to ask for His favours without respect to it, is to ask amiss.

If, when "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," some dying Israelite had declared himself unable to see the reason for this strange appointment—had therefore refused to look to it, and had, instead, resolved without authority, to ask for a cure direct from heaven, the poison would have continued to circulate and burn within him till he died—died perhaps on the very pave*ment of the tab*ernacle, in the very attitude of prayer.

If, in the old times, a worshipper had refused to ask for the mercy of God through the medium of the priest, had rejected the sacrifices as carnal appointments, and had virtually said, "Nature shall be my temple,"—

> "My censer's breath the mountain airs,
> And silent thoughts my only prayers,"—

with all his high professions of spirituality, he would have stood charged with disobedience to God's law, and his prayer would not have been accepted.

If a petitioner to some mere mortal king should presume to offer his memorial, aside from the medium through which alone such memorials are legally transmitted, despising that standing order as a shred of antique ceremony, or a relic of feudal etiquette, his petition would not reach the throne. Asking, he would not receive, because he asked amiss.

But illustrations need not be multiplied to show that we are not to expect favours from the King of kings, if in the very act of asking for them we violate an organic law of His government. Such a law is that which appoints Christ as the "one Mediator between God and man." It is a law *arising out* of the new circumstances in which sin *has placed* us, and which never can be set aside

while that sin exists, or those circumstances operate. If, now you know this law of God as the medium for presenting your requests, you present them in some other way, each prayer is an act not so much of supplication as defiance; it can only deserve, and may only receive, the reward of rebellion in disguise. Your offering may seem graceful as the dew-pearled leaves and glossy clusters once placed on the altar by Cain; but presented like his, without reference to the atoning Lamb, no approving sign from the Lord will glance upon it, and the only response of the oracle will be, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

It may be thought ungenerous to suppose, for one moment, that even a solitary individual who takes his station amongst Christian worshippers, could ever fail to recognise the mediatorial work of Christ as forming our one way to the Father. My brothers, I know that this is your creed, but what is your feeling? You recognise it with your minds, but do you recognise it with your hearts? You close your prayers with the formula, "We ask all these things for Christ's sake;" but in religion, meaning is everything, and what do you mean? I know what your lips are saying, but what does your spirit say? Do you truly renounce *dependence on* yourself, and rely alone on the

worthiness of Jesus? Do you make His name your grand argument, and only hope? Does the fact of His mediation have to you the force of a reality? Do you put all your prayers into His censer, that they may be offered as His own? On the contrary, must we not fear that the vital element of faith in Christ has often been altogether absent from our prayers, or has been present only in a faint, uncertain, wavering way? Then what wonder is it, if many of them have not been heard?

3. We ask amiss, when *we ask for wrong things*. The heart will ever give a bias to the judgment. What we *know*, depends upon what we *are*. In our case, the heart is wrong; the judgment, therefore, is likely to be wrong; and as a further consequence, we are likely to ask for wrong things. In us, there is at once the inexperience of childhood, and the darkness of a perverted nature; and, naturally, the things we wish for are not always the things a loving Father could bestow. To make this plainer, we may retain the image, but reverse the supposition of our Saviour's well-remembered appeal to parents. What man is there of you, who, if his child "ask for a serpent," pleased with its eye of sparkling fire and folds of emerald light, would give him a serpent? Or "*if* he ask for a stone"—a precious stone, delighted *with its glitter*, but ignorant of its worth, would

give him that stone? Or if he ask to gather the flowers that wave along the ledges of the deep river, or the beetling cliff, would send him to that brink of death? The very love that answers a child's request for good things, will refuse his request for wrong things, right though they seem to inexperience. So God deals with you. You sometimes ask for an object which fascinates you more than the serpent's beauty does the child; but it is withheld, because that glancing brightness conceals a deadly sting. You ask for a privilege which seems to you more precious than "the stones of a crown;" but it is withheld, because your spiritual life is yet too young to appreciate, keep, or use it. You ask for some great success in Christian service, but it is withheld, because it would involve a station on a precipice—you would be in danger of a fall—and you are kept from the dizzy eminence, to serve, like the shepherd's boy, in the quiet "Valley of Humiliation."* So it has ever been. "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," said Moses. "You ask for death," was the virtual reply; "for no man can see my face and live." "Take away my life," said Elijah, "for it is better for me to die than to live;" but omniscient love judged that it would be better for him to live than to die. "Let us build here three

* "Pilgrim's Progress."

tabernacles," said Peter, amidst the visions of the transfiguration, for, "Lord, it is good to be here." But the Lord saw that, good as it was to be there, it was better for His disciple, better for us, and better for unborn millions, that he should leave the mount of glory for the plains of common experience. "Grant that we may sit, one at the right hand, and the other at thy left, when thou comest in thy kingdom." So asked the brothers James and John, but the Master said, "Ye know not what ye ask." "Take away this thorn in the flesh," said the beseeching Paul; but the thorn was still allowed to rankle in his lacerated nature, that it might prove the occasion of making "strength perfect in weakness."

In this world of illusions, and from this heart of darkness, we often ask for a temptation, or for a sorrow, or for a curse, when, deceived by its wrong name or fascinating aspect, we think it would be a glorious boon. Where and what should we now have been, if all our prayers had been answered? You asked for prosperity to some particular enterprise on which you had set your heart; you asked and received not, because God saw that the shipwreck of your fortune would be better than the shipwreck of your faith. You clung with a desperate affection to your dying child. "He *shall not die!*" you cried, and then, with passionate and

inextinguishable fervency, you wrestled for the life with which your own was blended. Yet death came after all. The voice was suddenly hushed, to which all your soul was listening; the light in that face went out in a moment, a great wave of darkness swept over you, and all the world became still and charmless as the grave. But all was well. There can be no mistake in the judgment of the "only wise;" no unkindness in "love;" no unfaithfulness in Him whose name is "faithful and true."

What if your prayers have been heard? Agrippina implored the gods that she might live to see her infant Nero an emperor. Emperor he became, and from his imperial throne plotted that mother's death. And may we not believe that in more enlightened ages lives have been spared in answer to prayer, but spared in justice, not in mercy?—that gifts have been granted in answer to impetuous supplications, but that those gifts have afterwards been in the place of God to the suppliant, and have blighted what they seemed to bless?—that insubmissive wishes have often been gratified, as God gratified the wishes of the Israelites when "He sent them a king in His anger?" But He has not thus dealt with you. Love will explain the mystery of His ways. You have asked for *wrong things; you* are asking for them now;

so "you ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss."

4. We ask amiss, when our prayers are *wanting in intensity*. "A thing may be good in itself," remarks a Puritan father, "yet not well done. A man may sin in doing a good thing, but not in doing well. When Cicero was asked which oration of Demosthenes he thought best, he said, 'the *longest*.' But if the question should be, which of prayers are the best, the answer then must be, 'the *strongest*.' In prayer, length is of no moment. A prayer may be short, yet like a small unit in a number, may stand for much. It may be long, yet like a volume of cyphers, may stand for nothing. It may be short as the prayer of the Canaanite mother for her child; short as the prayer of the publican; short as the prayer of sinking Peter; short as the prayer of the dying thief; yet, if it be *strong*, God will hear it. It may be long as an evening shadow, yet, having no strength, it will not be accepted. Therefore, let all young converts, who are apt to think more than is meet of their own enlargements, endeavour to turn their length into strength, and remember the wide difference between the gift and the grace of prayer."

If we study the teachings of this Book with *regard to* prayer, we find that every model glows *with fervour*, and every word is intended to stimu-

late intensity. By the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel, as by a living picture or dramatic sermon, God says to us, "Pray intensely; and, though the darkness be around your spirit, pray on till the break of day; wrestle with the glorious Saviour by strength drawn *from* Him, and cry, in an agony of thought, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.'" By the parable of the unjust judge, who was prevailed over at last by the poor widow's importunity—by the householder, rising to make sudden provision for a midnight guest, at the earnest request of a neighbour—He points to the same grand lessons; and not only by signs, not only by parables, but by many an inspiring fact in history, He tells us that He expects to be implored, and that prayer should be earnest as necessity itself. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "How startling are these words," writes Paulinus, the evangelist of Yorkshire, in the seventh century. "Do violence to God? Storm the kingdom of heaven? He that forbids us to touch another's goods, rejoices to have His own invaded; He that condemns the violence of avarice, praises the violence of faith!"

Such is the clear requirement of God; but what is our response to it? When we solicit by an *express act the* immediate attention of the Almighty

Intelligence, that we may spread our case, and express our wants before Him, in what spirit do we ask His favours? Do we ask as a starving man would ask for bread; or as a sentenced man would ask for life? Does every word rush lighted from the lighted soul; and do we, in language born at the moment, express desires "all spirit and life, all flame and ecstacy?" Too many would have to confess in reply, "We do, indeed, daily ask the Father of Spirits to save us from evil the most stupendous, and to give us good the most sublime; but we often ask for these favours, glorious as they are, in words rather remembered than felt. Our prayer is sometimes like a movement of machinery, mere leverage and not volition, an act of the body when the spirit is asleep, or when the thoughts are far away." And, doubtless, this want of intensity is not always caused by radical unsoundness of principle. Some of you are obliged to read too much, to think too much, to *live* too much in the day, to have enough life left for due fervour in prayer. Many of you are living two or three lives at once. Nearly all of you, owing to the peculiar demands of modern life, have to diffuse your presence over too wide a surface, and to attend to too many things, for your soul's good. You live too much *ex*tensively to live *as much in*tensively as you ought. The Father,

who "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust," will not be unjust to you, and deal with that as a sin which is only an infirmity. But, brethren, question and cross-question yourselves. *Is it* infirmity alone? Is there no sinful resignation to circumstances? Are you verily guiltless? If you are earnest men, you are not looking for excuses only, not even for pardon only, but for deliverance. You know that whatever may serve to excuse cold prayers, "cold prayers do but beg a denial;" and that, though spiritless devotion may be forgiven, yet it cannot in its nature be effective. It is not enough for you that God should forgive the sacrificer, but that He should accept the sacrifice.

5. Connected with the languor of which we have been speaking, and sometimes helping to produce it, there is a fifth hindrance to success. We "ask amiss," *if we are satisfied with devoting hurried and infrequent periods of time to the exercise of prayer.* The heart deceives itself with a fatal facility, and will often do so by perverting some glorious truth, and thus making it have the effect of error. For instance, the truth which has just now been urged is misinterpreted, and the light which should guide is turned into "a light that leads astray." Many a man says within himself, "Since God respects *not mere length,* but only intensity of prayer, it

matters not how few or short my prayers are. An ejaculation now and then, a brief mental appeal when I leave my chamber, or a cry for help at any special crisis of the day, will meet every necessity of my spiritual life." But this is only a perversion. True, prayer consists not in telling off a long rosary of solemn words; and that length which is is simply the result of formal routine, or verbal fluency, is to be condemned without reserve; but this does not render it the less important that we should have seasons, long and frequent as circumstances will allow, which shall be regarded as sacred to prayer; stated seasons, when, like the prophet in his cave, or the priest in the holiest place, the soul is to be alone with God, to speak and to be spoken to, to rise above the life of the senses, and thus to cultivate a sacred intimacy with Him who is invisible.

The same causes which quench the intensity of prayer, also operate to shorten the period of its exercise. In some instances, such periods may be short and infrequent from necessity. Worn out with toil, and dependent on the will of others, the man of prayer may have to say, "My soul thirsteth after God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" But there are instances, *on the* contrary, when such special visits to the "*audience* chamber" are short and infrequent

from almost unconscious preference. The petitioner rushes in with his petition—he has an engagement—he cannot stay—many voices are even now calling him—prayer is an inconvenience, he regards it as a task, it is repeated in a "truantly spirit."* While he remains in the attitude of supplication, he is only, like Doeg, "*detained* before the Lord."†

This is no random language, no over-coloured picture. Many a man among you, if he dared to give his thoughts expression, would say, "I have so much to do, that I really have no time for prayer." Luther thought differently when he said, "I have so much to do, that I find I cannot get on without three hours a-day of praying." And his conclusion was, to the mind of God, sound and sober, as to yours it may seem extravagant. It evinced a wise judgment of life, of its real strength and its true economy. Enthusiastic as you may deem it, it displayed a more practical, as well as a more devotional, spirit than your own. It showed that he understood, more than you do, the relative importance of time and eternity, of engagements with God and engagements with men. No time for prayer! But the scholar must have time to read his books, and the sailor to consult his compass. Every man must have time for his own

* *Jeremy* Taylor. † 1 Sam. xxi. 7.

vocation; and your vocation is prayer. As a man lives by his labour, a Christian lives by his faith, and prayer is but the act by which faith draws the spirit's supplies of life from God, the source. No wonder that your prayers are not intense. There must be *time* for prayer to heighten into earnestness, there must be *time* for thought to burst into flame. If you go to the throne of grace as an ancient pilgrim went to Delphi, only at some great crisis, from necessity and not from delight, to consult and not to reside,* your prayer is not likely to be powerful, and God is not likely to be pleased. The probability is that it will be said of you, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

6. You should also be reminded that *the dominion of some particular sin* may often rob your prayers of their efficacy. "Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if a man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth."† Although this saying has not the authority of a Divine sentence, it is a conclusion drawn from the Divine book. Often, as the blind man who uttered it sat in his obscure corner in the synagogue, he had heard the minister read from the law such sentences as

* "They (persons distinguished by practical decision of character) are not disposed to be content in a region of mere ideas, while they ought to be advancing into the field of corresponding realities; they retire into that region sometimes, as ambitious adventurers anciently went to Delphi, to consult, but not to reside." —*Foster on Decision of Character.*

† *John ix. 31.*

these:—"When you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of violence."* "When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offerings, I will not accept them. For they have loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord will not accept them."†

There is no discouragement here to the repenting sinner. The Father is always waiting for the wandered child, to receive him with the kindness of kindness, to give more than he asks, and to answer even his unspoken and unspeakable prayers. But the sinner who comes praying, yet unrepenting—claiming the portion of a child, yet without the spirit of a child—who is willing to live under the sway of some master-vice, and, Achan-like, to hide "in the midst of his tent" some "accursed thing;" who says in effect, "Lord, grant me thy favours, yet let me keep my sins; I am ready to relinquish those which shake my credit, but I adore the 'useful vices;' I will give up all open evil courses, but wish to nurse my secret sins; for I wish to stand well with man, and to have his favour, but I can dispense with thine." "Let not that man think that he shall obtain anything of the Lord:" he does but insult the Majesty on

* *Isaiah i.* 15. † Jer. xiv. 12.

high, and he will ever find his sin to neutralise his prayer.

The morbid anatomy of character, and especially of our own, though a repulsive is an instructive study. It will do us good to search into our own constitutional sins and besetments, that we may know how far we have asked amiss in consequence of their ascendancy.

Are you cherishing some "idol of the heart?" With reference to this, "The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face. Should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Every man of the house of Israel who setteth up his idols in his heart . . . . and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols." *

Are you knowingly working some injustice to the interests or the reputation of others? Then your acknowledgment should be, "If I regard iniquity (inequity) in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

Are you becoming gradually entangled in the meshes of some system of concealment? Are you *hiding in* your breast some secret which tempts

* Ezekiel xiv. 1—5.

you to prevarication, and tends to make your life a lie? God "requireth truth in the inward parts."

Are you breathing an unforgiving spirit? Then "if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses."*

Are you the willing slaves of anger? "Anger is a short madness, and an eternal enemy to discourse, and sober counsels, and fair conversation . . . . . and therefore can never suffer a man to be in a disposition to pray. . . . . Prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest. Prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts; it is the daughter of charity, and the sister of meekness . . . But anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and is therefore contrary to that attention which presents our prayers in a right line to God."† "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." This, we are told, was an old Jewish saying, which the apostle appropriated and stamped with the new authority

* *Matthew v. 23, 24; vi. 15.* † Jeremy Taylor.

of inspiration. Its ancient meaning was, "Let not your anger last till the time of the evening sacrifice, so as to destroy its acceptableness, for no true prayer can be offered in an angry spirit." When the idolatrous king of Israel came with Jehoshaphat to ask the counsels and prayers of Elisha, the prophet's soul was wrought up into such a sudden tempest of indignation at the sight of the apostate, that his anger unfitted him for prayer. "But," said he, "now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, that when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."* He needed music, with its melting whispers and dying falls, to still the vibrations of thought and nerve, before he was calm enough to "inquire of the Lord," so as to receive and transmit His messages. When the mind is like an angry sea, the light of truth and the reflected face of God upon it will be like the shivered glory of the sun on a million breaking waves; there can be no clear thought—no defined and settled purpose; and even those desires which have in them the true spirit of prayer, last but for a flickering instant. You never needed prayer so much, and yet you cannot pray. Before any other prayer is a possibility, you must say with Robert Hall: "*Lamb* of God, calm my perturbed spirit!"

* 2 Kings iii. 14, 15.

Are we giving place to unbelief? "I will," says the apostle, "not only that men lift up holy hands without wrath, but without *doubting*." Too often we only half believe in our prayers, and we should really be more surprised at their success than at their failure. To borrow a quaint saying, it is as if we thought "God hard of hearing, or hard of giving." If we had been in the house where "many were gathered together," praying for Peter's deliverance from prison, at the time when Rhoda ran in to say, "Peter is at the gate!" we should have been among those who replied, "Thou art mad!"—"It is his angel!" Measuring religious forces by natural standards, prayer is almost regarded rather as an experiment than an experience. "We will try it," our hearts say, "for if it do no good, it will do no harm. It is efficacious for others, but, somehow, we are not sanguine of our own success."

When such prayers are dishonoured, it is only what we ourselves anticipated; and if any among us wonder that nothing comes of them—if we ask, "How is it that they have taken no effect? We see the prayers of others are mighty, how is it that our own are powerless?"—if when the power of Jesus expels from some human soul the Evil Spirit which has been casting it down in foul places, *and tearing* it with the passions that blast

and scorch—if, then, we say, "Why could not we cast him out?" Jesus replies, "Because of your unbelief." It is unbelief that defeats your prayers for yourselves and for others; "For verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you."

7. "We ask amiss," *when we ask for a blessing on some sinful deed, or on something which we do for a sinful end.* "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your pleasures." Regarding the epistle of James as mainly addressed to all the Jews out of Palestine, whether converts to Christianity or not, Macknight supposes that there is a condemnatory reference to the conduct of those Jews who were ready "to compass sea or land to make one proselyte," who implored that success from heaven might crown their endeavours, but whose object was only to increase the wealth and importance of their party, and not to advance the glory of God. Their cause was wrong; but even had their cause been right, their motive would have been fatal to the value of their prayers. Such is the "deceivableness of unrighteousness," and the greatness of the heart's *treachery* to itself, that prayers in such a spirit *have been* breathed in every age and clime.

A Roman robber is said thus to have prayed to the goddess Laverna :—" Fair Laverna, give me a prosperous robbery, a rich prey, and a secret escape. Let me become rich by fraud, and still be accounted religious."* The Pharisees, those Brahmins of ancient Israel, "devoured widows' houses," and yet, "for a pretence, made long prayers," no doubt trying to believe that prayer sanctified their fraud, and had a virtue to secure its prosperity. Many a man, who wears a worthier name than they, will pray, when, if he had but courage to analyse his prayer, he would find that he is virtually asking God's blessing on some sin. He will pray when he sets out on some enterprise which must prove a temptation to himself, or which tends to the injury of others; he will pray as he begins some act of strife or litigation; he will pray when he is about to engage in some commercial dishonesties, made "respectable" by custom, or disguised by some gentle name; and, while he cannot afford, or will not dare to consider the question of their Christian lawfulness, he prays that God may bless him in his deed; and the desire of his heart is that he may still be "counted religious." But even though the thing we seek be intrinsically good, if our motive in seeking it be doubtful, our prayers will be unavailing. Not only

* Horace, Ep. I., Lib. i., 16, 60.

must we know what we ask, but why we ask it. When Simon Magus, wishing to be a skilful magician, asked for "the gift of the Holy Ghost," he sought "a good gift," but for an evil end, and therefore it was not granted. You may do right to ask for health; to ask for the powers of industrial efficiency; to ask for social influence; to ask God to "speed the plough" of worldly toil; for there is no evil inherent in the nature of these things; but if you ask simply with a view to purposes of pride or pleasure, God will be silent. You may ask for success to your own religious company, but if you ask only as a Pharisee asked for proselytes, it may be said, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

Peculiar Hindrances to the Efficacy of Social Prayer.

"Not thou from us, O Lord, but we
Withdraw ourselves from thee.
When we are dark and dead,
And thou art covered with a cloud,
Hanging before thee like a shroud,
So that our prayer can find no way,
O teach us that we do not say,
'Where is *thy* brightness fled?'

"But that we search and try
What in ourselves has wrought this blame:
For thou remainest still the same:
But earth's own vapours earth may fill
With darkness and thick clouds, while still
The sun is in the sky."

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."—JAMES iv. 3.

WE may now with advantage extend our inquiries into the causes of unsuccessful SOCIAL prayer.

There are still not a few, wearing the cross as their sign, in whose opinion the acceptableness of social prayer is materially affected by *the place* in which the assembly meets. They think, with *South, that* God "has not only told us what to

sacrifice, but *where*," and that "although not a respecter of persons, He is a respecter of places." They even break up the little companies that were wont to meet in family prayer, and transfer their worship to the scene of the ecclesiastical "morning service," under the impression that there it will be most acceptable. In their belief, a certain vital sacredness belongs to the structure which has been consecrated by the presence of ceremony and the devotion of ages. When they present their offerings of worship there, the vast arch, the mysterious shadow, the glimmering streams of pictured light, the doorways, "all garlanded with carven imageries," and the solemn spells of antiquity, help to dissolve their souls in emotion, and combine to strengthen their feeling that the place itself has a charm which "sanctifieth both the giver and the gift." But you remember that Christ, anticipating the change His Gospel would introduce, said to the woman of Samaria:—"Believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." To the earliest generations, indeed, His *language* was, "Until the day break, and the [redacted] flee away, I will get me to the mountain

of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense,"* but now the sun is up and the shadows are gone; no temple confines the tokens of His presence, and all the earth is holy ground. "The Jew, when about to pray, needed to go up into the temple to buy a dove; to take in his hands wood and fire; to lay hold of a knife and stand near the altar, and to perform many ordinances. But with us no such things are required. Wherever thou art, thou bearest with thee altar, knife, and victim, being thyself priest, altar, and sacrifice. The place will be no hindrance, the time no obstacle. Whereso-ever two or three meet in my name, says Christ, there am I in the midst of them."† In the wood, in the cellar, in the chambers of the mine, and even round the watch-fires of the ghastly Crimean field, bands of praying men have often had to say, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The value of our service is not now in any degree affected by the scene of its performance; and if the prayers of the Christian brotherhood fail, we must look beyond this for the cause of failure.

We propose, however, for the present, to restrict our inquiries to the evils which impede the success of that more select social prayer which is peculiar to our "prayer meetings;" exercises of devotion

* *Sol. Song*, iv. 6. † Chrysostom.

which are not generally recognised by those who plead for sanctity of place, and with whom, therefore, we have now no further argument. Prayer meetings; indeed, although their existence is plainly assumed in the New Testament,* are not the subjects of any formal command; they are *born out* of Christianity, rather than established *upon* it; like family worship, like schools for the religious education of our children, and like a thousand other things, the profound necessity of which is allowed by our Christian consciousness, they are the outforce of a living law within us, rather than the result of obedience to any positive legislation; still they are so natural to the new life, they seem so necessary to it, that we can scarcely conceive of any voluntary association of Christians remaining in a healthy state when they are not maintained.

1. The comparatively *small numbers* who sustain it may help to account for the comparatively slight and partial results of social prayer. Numberless sentences of promise or direction teach that God regards, with a high and sacred complacency, the "assemblies of the saints," and that such assemblies have their own peculiar attraction for the presence of Jesus. All His dispensations help to reveal the principle that "He loveth the gates of *Zion more* than the dwellings of Jacob;" that is,

* Acts i. 14; xii. 12; Heb. x. 25; 1 Cor. xiv.

there is a sense in which He loves the large assembly more than the small assembly. They suggest the probability that blessings, not granted to the prayers of an individual, would be granted to the congregation in which many individual prayers melt in one mighty strain. Where, for instance, God promised the gift of the Spirit, He subjoined the qualification, "I will yet for this be inquired of," not by the single Israelite, but by "the *house* of Israel, to do it for them." As every power must be stronger in its collective than in its separate existence, in its aggregate than in its individuality—and will have augmented force in the degree of its increasing accumulation—efficacious as is solitary prayer, social prayer has a heightened efficacy; and if "the prayer of one righteous man avail much," the prayers of many avail more. When, therefore, we "forsake the assembling of ourselves together"—when we leave them to be sustained by a limited and variable attendance—what wonder is it if we find that in proportion as they lose in social force, they die in spiritual effect?

There is yet another affecting consideration. When all the inhabitants of a certain district are summoned for the purpose of sending a petition to the legislature, but only a few respond; the inference is, that, whatever may be the feeling of a few

individuals, the community itself is indifferent to that petition, and it is, therefore, set aside as a thing of utter insignificance. On the same principle, when a church is summoned by its executive ministry to weekly meetings for prayer, and only a few members attend, is it not a fair inference, that the church itself is indifferent to those prayers? They may, indeed, be earnestly presented by individuals, but the *whole society* is not identified with their presentation; and if God dealt with us, as man deals with man, we could not feel surprised if such prayers of the church were rather regarded as an assertion of its indifference, than an expression of its strong desire.

We may fairly compute that seventeen thousand regular weekly meetings for prayer are held by the Nonconformist churches of England and Wales alone, independently of less regular, but perhaps more numerous assemblies of a similar kind. Since 1784, when a few Christians at Nottingham, belonging to the "Association" of which Carey was a member, resolved to set apart an hour on the first Monday evening in every month, "for extraordinary prayer for the extending of Christ's kingdom in the world,"* this rule has been almost universally maintained by the free churches. Facts

* "*Thus* commenced the united missionary prayer meetings, now prevalent *through every* part of Christendom."—*Memoir of* Dr. Carey, page 59.

like these seem at first sight to operate against our present argument; and, doubtless, the effects, both secret and revealed, resulting from such meetings, have been incalculably vast; but, on the other hand, all allow that the social interest they excite is mournfully defective, and all who believe in the power of intercession must feel that if the churches in whose name they are summoned would attend them in their strength, and throng in thousands where now they meet in insignificant companies, the effects would be such "as earth saw never," such as "heaven would look down to see."

2. *Want of agreement in spirit*, on the part of those who meet to pray, may sometimes hinder the success of social prayer. "I say unto you, that if two of you shall *agree* on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." This is the law of the prayer meeting. Agreement is the essence of its value, the secret of its power. Without this, the visible presence of great numbers will be as nothing, for, in its highest reality, a prayer meeting is an invisible assembly—not a meeting of bodies but of *souls*—souls all bent on one purpose, and swayed by one life. The great recorded prayers of the ancient church are represented not as the praying of the Israelites, but of

Israel:—all the nation speaking as one man, and owning but one great personality. Such is the Divine ordeal of a true prayer meeting. If, while one prays aloud, the rest are prayerless;—if, instead of pouring their desires along the channel of his language, they are the listless victims of unsettled and dispersive thought, before God there is no prayer meeting, but only one solitary prayer. Let every man, if possible, sign every petition—sign it with his individual mind—and make it his own, or else let all the non-consenting multitude separate, each man to "mourn apart," and to offer his sacrifice in solitude. We long to see the places of prayer crowded with the forms of suppliants, but those suppliants, to bring down the power of the Highest, though many, must be one; and the voice of the prayer meeting must be as the one voice of many waters.

3. Much of what frequently enters into the exercise of social prayer, *is no prayer at all*, and is therefore followed by no definite results. If it should be said to you, on your return from one of those meetings which are convened for prayer,—"You, in concert with your companions, have sought and obtained an audience with the Great Spirit; you have spent an hour in His presence; *and now*, what is the history of that golden hour? What was the mighty wish you felt burning to

express? What was the secret weight, relief from which you have been imploring? What royal gift have you been asking for? How did you frame your petitions; what arguments did you venture to use; and how were they received? Is there any hope for you, and will God indeed hear your cry?" What, brethren, would be your reply to questionings like these? Would you not sometimes be compelled to confess, that the men who had been appointed, on account of their experience, to lead your solemn embassy, and speak in your name, appeared to have no definite purpose in view whatever; and that, although their words had the sacred colour of devotion, they had in them but little of the petitionary element? Would you not have to say, as John Newton did, "The good men rather expressed the desires of the Lord to the people, than the desires of the people to the Lord?" Would you not feel that, during a large part of the time, while you seemed to be uniting in a prayer, you had only been listening to a soliloquy, or a disquisition; that much of what you heard was rather a discourse *on* God than an appeal *to* Him; something which seemed to have been meant for the human ear as much as for the Divine —an exercise as distinct from prayer as the proclamation of a herald who sounds forth the titles of a king, or the song of a bard who celebrates his

deeds, is distinct from the cry of the mourner who implores his mercy? Would you not have reason to complain that even the real prayers presented had no particular relation to existing circumstances; that the same phrases were repeated in the same order, and in the same cadence, as they had ever been; that there was no special character in the prayer, and that it would have been just as suited to one place as to another, and to one century as to another? To say that most of our prayer meetings might be thus reported, would be a charge at once unloving and untrue; but the evil is sufficiently real and extensive to operate as a fearful hindrance to the power of social prayer.

The prayer meetings of a church in earnest have not a history like this. The ancient prayer meeting which preceded the conversion of three thousand in one day—the torch-light prayer meetings in the catacombs—the prayer meetings of those whose bones are now "scattered on the Alpine mountains cold"—the prayer meetings of the Covenanters in their "temples not made with hands," were not like this. When bells, whose tones are familiar to us now, were tolling for martyrs—when little companies met together in *the name* of Jesus, in the hay-loft, or in the green *secrecies* of the woods, breathing whispered

prayers, and turning with trembling fingers the leaves of their one black-letter Testament, shutting its clasps and hiding it away as a pearl of great price, at the rustle of every approaching footstep —their meetings were not such as this. It was not in answer to prayers sounding only like vague generalities, or the dead phrases of routine, that God sent the Reformation; but in answer to the groanings of prisoners, and the cries of those who were appointed unto death.*

Shall the church only be in earnest when in sorrow, and do we require persecution to teach us how to pray?

4. Another cause of ineffectiveness may be *the frequent want of suitable gifts* on the part of those who lead the devotion. We know full well that words are not prayers, and that sometimes the most availing prayers are wordless. Of our intercourse with God, as well as with man, it may be said:—

> "For words are weak, and most to seek,
> When wanted fifty-fold;
> And then if silence will not speak,
> And trembling lip, and changing cheek,
> There's nothing *told.*"

When alone with God, the language of silence, or of confused, broken, almost silent speech, tell

* Psalm cii. 20.

all that need to be told; but it is different in social prayer; there, the "gift of utterance" is required, and the prayer-utterer, like the preacher, must find fit words, and seek the gift no less than the grace of prayer.

The apostle has, in the clearest terms, given us the law respecting spiritual gifts to edification. "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God, for no *man* understandeth him." "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, edifieth *himself;*" that is himself only. "If the pipe or harp give an uncertain sound, how shall we know what is piped or harped? Wherefore, let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret; for if I pray in an unknown tongue, *my* spirit prayeth, but the understanding" of *others* "is unfruitful."

Now it must be confessed that our prayer-utterers sometimes violate the spirit of this law, and, although in a sense different from that originally intended, "pray in an unknown tongue."

It is not of ungrammatical sentences or stammering language that we complain, for these may often be the vehicles of clear and affecting thought that we can easily follow and easily feel;—it is not of a broad provincial dialect that we complain, for the same complaint might have been made of *the disciple* to whom was given the keys of heaven,

and who was most honoured by his Lord in the scenes of the Pentecostal glory;—we have no sympathy with the complaints of those who despise the unpolished speech of the poor, and whose slight to the prayer meeting is one of the earliest symptoms of waning love, and of a wish to be openly identified with religion, only when religion itself is identified with education, with wealth, or with social refinement. We would lend no sanction, however indirectly, to that fastidiousness of taste which often makes the churches so reluctant to educate their less experienced members to the use of their endowments for edification. We have often felt the prayers of the workman from the bench, or the peasant from the plough, so true and simple, so rich with Scripture, and so alive with spiritual fire, that they have helped to kindle and express our own prayers, far more than has been effected by the utterances of men renowned for lettered and cultivated thought.

But what we complain of is this:—From acquired indistinctness of voice, from grotesque metaphor, from "the sin of excessive length," from the want of naturalness, from the use of the worst and most deadly *forms*—the forms that are unwritten —forms of their own, which are but the petrified expressions of old and extinct prayers; from *deficiency in* sacred awe before God, perhaps

leading to language of endearment verging on profanity—perhaps to the constant repetition of the Great Name as a mere waste-word of prayer—a word for the mind to rest upon, while it collects itself for the next sentence, like the constantly recurring phrases in the oldest poetry, used for a similar purpose by the bards—from these and other faults, individual or conventional, those who are called upon to utter our prayers for us may sometimes exhaust our powers of attention, be "unfruitful to our understanding," and even tend to keep our minds *away* from God, instead of aiding us in our approach to Him.

Some would tell us, that the remedy for all this is to be found in the use of written forms of devotion. But, to our minds, the use of such forms would destroy the very conception of a social meeting for prayer. Forms limiting to set sentences the outpourings of family affection; ancient forms for the language of modern commerce; forms fixed and invariable as an iron inclosure, for the utterance one to another of our mutual wants and wishes, in all their endless infinities of change, would seem to us to be just as natural, and just as helpful, as forms for the effusions of social prayer. But even if we felt no objection arising from the *nature of* such a directory in itself, we should fear *to deviate* from what seems to us to have been the

informal practice of Christ and His apostles. Since all our other laws, and all our great regulative truths, come to us from inspired men alone, we should be afraid to take anything so important as a settled liturgical law from any later or lower authority. Greatly as we esteem the venerable forms which have been bequeathed to the church by such men as Ambrose, Chrysostom, or Basil, and greatly as we may, at uncertain times, feel aided by their use, we should feel it our highest privilege not so much to pray through their prayers, as to pray with the Spirit of God, by whom those prayers were prompted—the Spirit that abides with us for ever. We should rather that the churches might still be able to say, as in the days of Tertullian, "We pray not as those who repeat their prayers after their priests . . . but pouring out our prayers conceived in our own breasts;" or, as was expressed by Justin Martyr, "In all our oblations we praise Him according to our *ability*, in the way of prayer and thanksgivings;" and we think with John Milton, that any authoritative moulds of prayer would "debar the servants of God of their noblest talent—prayer in the congregation." In our judgment, the power of devotional utterance is not an acquisition, but a gift. When our Saviour ascended on high, "He received *gifts for men;*" and, of these coronation gifts,

this, we think, is the "noblest." We regard it as something rather to be prayed for than studied for. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," says Paul; and right earnestly should we covet this. If we did so, the hindrances to social prayer which arise from the defective medium of its presentation would soon disappear; but when we unite in prayer for edification, we do not pray as we ought for those gifts of the Spirit which are the appointed means of edification. Social prayer is the exercise by which the church most "edifieth itself in love." Let us, then, resolve to seek that gift which is the prime instrument of the exercise; so that if the apostle might speak to us from the world of the glorified, he would be able to say "I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him in all *utterance*, and in all knowledge . . . so that ye come behind in no gift."

Enough has now been said to show why our prayers, both in private and in public, are not more successful. Although there is much to call for our sorrow, there is nothing to excite our surprise, or suggest our unbelieving thoughts. Prayer is as powerful as ever. The instrument has lost *nothing* of its ancient value, only we have not *learned* how to use it. No secret impediment, hid

beneath the waves of mystery, has stopped the working of our telegraph, and there is no defect in the medium itself, that makes our feeble signals fail. Even now, a true prayer whispered from the dust will thrill to the throne; and the word has not been yet revoked which says, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves. As at the cry of Moses, the Red Sea was parted by the rod of omnipotence; as, after three years' famine, when the bird dropped from the bough, and the leaf withered from the stem, and all Israel was but a dying nation in a dying land, the cry of Elijah brought down "abundance of rain;"—the cry of the believer might still bring wonders to pass, and if prayer were put forth in all its power, we should see yet "greater things than these." "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing so that there shall not be room enough to contain it." But this power of prayer is the very thing we want, and how can it be obtained? Can we forget that the power of prayer is the power of God, and that He is ready to impart it at our request? Even the patriarch of heathen bards had light enough to say, "Prayers are the *daughters of God;*" and the ancient Greeks

thought all things were possible to the *enthusiast*, that is, to one filled with the Deity. "Be ye filled with the Spirit," is the language of our more sure word of prophecy; and to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with light, filled with faith, filled with that Divine life which will be ever ascending to its source, and breaking forth in free, spontaneous prayer. Brethren, we must pray for the power of prayer, we must ask for that Spirit, taught by whose influences we can never "ask amiss;" for is not the promise still in force, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. . . . If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Only, as a father very seldom gives his best gift to his children the moment they begin to ask for it, we should not be discouraged if God should not answer us forthwith; we must persevere, we must, with the life He has already given, continue to pray for more. Feeling the low measure in which the Spirit is at present granted to be the greatest affliction of the church, we must give Him no rest until the Spirit comes to us in His full magnificence of blessing. The cry of the *individual* suppliant, the cry of all the mourners *in Zion* together, should be, "Behold, O Lord, a

poor company of creatures gasping for life! Thy Spirit is vital breath; we are ready to die, if thy Spirit breathe not. Pity thine own offspring, thou Father of mercies. Take from us, keep from us what thou wilt, but, oh, withhold not thine own Spirit."*

* Prayer of John Howe. Works, vol. vi., p. 251.

The Eleventh Commandment.

"Vide, inquiunt, ut se diligunt; et pro alterato mori parati sunt."

"We the members, Christ the Head,
He the sun, we, beams He showers;
Brethren by one Master led,
We are His, and He is ours.
Only such love will suffice,
As the love that dwells in Him,
Love that from the cross ne'er flies,
Love that spares not life or limb.

"Thus, O truest Friend, unite
All thy consecrated band,
That their hearts be set aright,
To fulfil thy last command.
Each must onward urge his friend,
Helping him in word and deed,
Love's best pathway to ascend,
Following where thou, Lord, dost lead."

"A new commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."—JOHN xiii. 34.

DOCTOR USHER, having long heard of "holy Samuel Rutherford," and how the tender grace of his daily life made his home a heaven on earth, resolved when on a visit to Scotland to witness it for himself. That he might see it in its simplicity, he assumed the disguise of a poor wayfarer, knocked at the door of the manse, and asked

for a night's shelter. He was welcomed with primitive hospitality, and when at a certain hour the master came down to pray and converse with his family as all were gathered round the kitchen ingle, his opening question to the white-haired stranger was, "How many commandments are there?" "Eleven," was the reply; the listeners regarding him as almost a miracle of ignorance. Before long, however, Rutherford found that, like the ancient Hebrew chief, who in receiving strangers had "entertained angels unawares," he had now under his roof one of the lights and princes of sanctified intellect. Keeping his discovery to himself, he privately asked his guest to preach for him on the next day, which was the Sabbath. The servants were then startled to find their mysterious visitor standing in the pulpit—still more confounded were they when he began his sermon. Taking for his text, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another;"—"This," said he, "may be reckoned *the eleventh commandment.*"

I. Our thoughts are now to be occupied by the same theme; and, first, let us inquire into THE PRINCIPLE of this new commandment—"Love one *another, as I* have loved you."

We are to have love *like* that of Christ. In one sense, this is impossible. "Measure the waters in the hollow of thine hand; mete out heaven with a span; comprehend the dust of the earth in a measure; weigh the mountains in scales; and the hills in a balance;"—these *are* measurable things, but the love of Christ is measureless. There is nothing in His nature which is not infinite. The depths of *God* are depths of love, for God is love, and Christ is God. His perfections are His glory, but His love is the glory of His glory, the boundless glory of the boundless Essence. Till the less can include the greater, and the human the Divine, we may not fathom the depths, or grasp the dimensions of Christ's love. Then, how can we keep this law? To love like Paul—to love like John—would be a lofty aim, but who can love like Christ?

Let us not mistake His meaning. He asks not that our love should equal His, but *resemble* His; not that it should be of the same strength, but of the *same kind*. A pearl of dew will not hold the sun, but it may hold a spark of its light. A child, by the sea, trying to catch the waves as they dash in clouds of crystal spray upon the sand, cannot hold the ocean in a tiny shell, but he may hold a *drop of* the ocean water. "There is an ocean of *love in* my heart," says Christ, "let a drop of that

ocean be received into yours. Your love one to another must not be a mere earthly element. It must have a different nature from the love you were born with. It must be something higher than love of kindred—or love of home—or love of country; it must be of the same kind as that which I have for you. It must be Divine. Let me pour it into you, that you may pour it out on the objects of your sanctified affection."

Divine love, therefore, is but another name for that Divine life which animates all the disciples, and which, through Christ, all may have "more abundantly." None need despair of his ability to obey his Lord's will, for Christ *gives* the love which He *commands*, and you need only ask, in order to have. "For this cause," says the apostle,* "I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." In

* Eph. iii. 14—19.

this way we may have that which we can never measure, and know that which we can never know. "We may know experimentally," Dr. Owen remarks, "that which we cannot know comprehensively; we may know that in its power which we cannot know in its depths;" and not until we thus know the love of Christ, can we keep His law of love.

II. Let us inquire into the MODE OF ACTION which this commandment prescribes. It evidently refers to the course of action in which our Saviour's love was embodied, and in which it found expression. That course of action is to be the standard of our own.

1. If we love as Christ loves, we shall be ready to love others *before they love us*. There is nothing low or narrow in that love which is the return of attachment, or that which springs from gratitude, or that which is enchanted into existence by the magic of spiritual loveliness. Still, the highest love is the most disinterested, and such was the love of Christ. If He had waited to love us until we loved Him, where should we now have been? But His love took the initiative step in our immortal friendship; it was altogether unsuggested *and* unassisted by man. On our part there was *not a*pathy alone, but *anti*pathy. The carnal mind

is not merely in a *state* of enmity to God, but it *is* enmity. Enmity to God is its vital essence. Destroy its enmity, and you destroy its very life. Our minds were carnal before Christ saved us; and although our enmity to Him was not always visible, it was always latent, waiting for any sharp collision of His will with ours to call it forth, as the steel strikes fire from the stone. "Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us;" and that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." His love explains His death, but what can explain His love? Sublime as it is, our love must acknowledge no lower law.

A slave, who had by the force of his sterling worth risen high in the confidence of his master, saw one day, trembling in the slave market, a negro, whose grey head and bent form showed him to be in the last weakness of old age. He implored his master to purchase him. He expressed his surprise, but gave his consent. The old man was bought and conveyed to the estate. When there, he who had pleaded for him took him to his own cabin—placed him in his own bed—fed him at his own board—gave him water from his own cup; when he shivered, carried him into the sunshine; when he drooped in the heat, bore him softly to the shade. "What is the meaning of all *this?*" *asked* a witness "Is he your father?"

"No." "Is he your brother?" "No." "Is he, then, your friend?" "No—he is my enemy. Years ago, he stole me from my native village, and sold me for a slave; and the good Lord has said, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.'" So the slave interpreted the Divine charge; and all will confess his interpretation to be sure.

But, Christian, you have no enemy in the family of Christ. There may, indeed, be some one, between whom and yourself there is no natural affinity; you misunderstand him, he misunderstands you; you think he thwarts your plans and blights your fame, he may think the same of you. In his case, like flowers beneath the snow-drift, like gems beneath the rock, the graces of the spirit lie concealed by the cold and harsh repellancies of nature; and this may be the case with you. Your heart may say of him, "Why should I love that man? what is he? what has he done to call affection forth?" And his heart may say the same of you. But, even if he were all that your morbid imagination pictures, he is not to you what once you were to Christ, before Christ's love first took your spirit captive; and from that first hour of a new life, you have been under obligation to keep this, His new com-

mandment, "Love one another; as I have loved you."

2. To love as Christ loves, *is to let our love* be a *practical, and not a merely sentimental* thing.

Some are in danger of becoming mere religious sentimentalists. They revel in the poetry of feeling; they are easily wrought into an effervescence of tenderness; they delight in a storm of emotional vehemency. All this they suppose to be Christian love. Yet it is a love that costs them nothing. They feel much, but do little. They are ready for sympathy, but not for sacrifice. They try, in effect, to divorce benevolence from beneficence. They are the sensitive plants of the church, and not fruit-bearing trees of righteousness. Butler remarks that "passive impressions, by being repeated, grow weaker; only practical habits are strengthened by repeated acts." Thus, this fine sensibility, cherished for its own sake, and having no outforce in deeds for the good of others, both weakens the soul, and weakns itself; and the mere "Man of Feeling" often has at last to say:—

> "I cannot feel as once I felt,
> And yet I know not why;
> It is the greatest woe of life
> To feel all feeling die."

But, even if it could live with all its morning freshness to the last, it would in itself be worth-

less. There is no righteousness in mere feeling. "Abiding alone," it is but soft effeminacy, or weak indulgence; luxury, not love. To let it pass for love is a mistake most pernicious to the man himself, and most dishonouring to Christ. He has not said, "By love *feel* for one another," merely; but "By love *serve* one another." Let us interpret His law by His life. Study the expressions of His love; for ours must speak the same language, and act in the same way. His love speaks to us through a glorious *deed*, which wakes the song of heaven and the wonder of eternity; then our love, like His, must speak through action, and take as the motto on its shield, "Deeds, not words." "Christian works are but animate love, as flowers are the animate spring-tide." His love found expression through a *sacrifice;* then ours must express itself through sacrifice. His love was displayed when "He *bore our griefs*, and carried our sorrows;" then, with all the tenderness of strength, "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." His love would delegate to no other being His work on our behalf. Looking on lost men, He did not say, "I will send an angel;" but, "I will go myself to save them;" and redemption was His own *personal act.* Then our love is not to have a mere representative utterance, but to find embodiment in our

own personal ministry. It will not be satisfied by an indolent gift to some annual subscription list, or by handing over its own responsibilities to some impersonal institution. It will to the utmost pay its own visits, do its own work; and by thus being most Christ-like will be most effective. Sometimes the costliest gifts, and the blazonry of the most imposing delegation, will be as nothing in their power, compared with touches and glances from the living presence—with the slightest words, warm with the tones of the moment, the slightest acts, alive with individuality, and wrought directly by ourselves.

3. To love as Christ loves, to *let our love be humble.* All love is lowly. Pride is its greatest frustrator, and its sternest foe. You often see a loving purpose kept in check by a haughty will, and the ice of pride seal the river of love. You have seen two parties living in cold estrangement, when the original cause of difference has long since ceased to operate, and the first impulse of angry excitement has long since died away. Each waits for the other to speak the first word, or take the first step, and pride makes him unable to attempt the grateful overture of kindness, or the delicate surprise of courtesy that might restore the love he longs for. You have seen a father and son *thus proudly* stand apart. Each yearns to

fling himself into the other's embrace, but pride forbids the younger to confess his fault, and the elder his sorrowful tenderness. Look at that father in his family, and you only read on his features the signals of grand reserve and austere repose; and he appears to be the very personification of indifference. But all this is artificial. Could you see him in the still secrecy of his chamber, every flash and quiver of that worn face, each broken prayer, and the tear splashing down upon his open book, would betray the strange contradiction between the flesh and the spirit, and the deadly wrestle of pride with love. Still, pride has its way; the two, who long to be one, continue to be parted; and, at last, estrangement settles into fixed aversion. But where love lives in its strength, it will be stronger than death. It will come down, cast aside state and ceremony, submit to a thousand indignities, stoop to save, and "stand at the door and knock." It will make the king become a suppliant to his subject, and the father to his child. It will nerve the wife to wander blindly through the eddying atmosphere of snow, to brave the dead midnight, to tread the lonely lane, to seek the haunts of meanest vice, there to plead, kneel, weep, and bear anything, *that* she may bring back home one whom society *would* scorn, but to whom she still clings with

humble, pathetic affection. "Love is our weight," says Augustine; "it makes the spirit sink: yet, before God, he is the highest who seems to sink the lowest."

Love to souls is one and the same thing all over the universe. It is the same in heaven as on earth, in God as in man. All love is humble, and just because God's is the loftiest, it is the lowliest. Let us not recoil from this as an irreverent saying. For if God were not humble, He must have remained for ever a secret. If He had not descended with a stoop of infinite humility, He could not have come near enough, even to the highest angel, for that angel to descry, however obscurely, the glory of His presence. But, if you would know what humility can do, study Redeeming Love. Were the native of some distant world permitted to visit us, and hear from our lips for the first time the story of our faith, he would, it is likely, be overpowered by the marvels of Divine humility. "Tell me these things again," he would naturally say, "for surely I have not understood you. Did God indeed come down to earth?" "Yes," would be the reply; "we would not seek Him, and therefore He sought us. 'Hearken unto me, ye proud-hearted,' said the Holy One, 'I *bring near* my righteousness;'* as

* Isaiah xlvi. 12.

you will not come to me, I will come to you." "What, *come as man?*" "Yes:—

> 'The Son of God with glory streamed,
> Too bright for us to scan;
> But we can face the rays that beamed
> From the mild Son of Man.'

So, to bring the Divine glory within the horizon of our faculties, He came in 'the likeness of man.'" "*Make himself of no reputation!*" "Perfectly true; 'He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.'" "*Take the form of a servant!*" "Yes, the Highest became the lowest; the Master of Life took the station of a slave. The Son of Man came into the world, not to be the receiver of services, but that He might Himself render service to others."* "DIE ON A CROSS!" "Yes; 'He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'" "And after all this, did He indeed *call you brethren?*" "Yes; still He was not ashamed to acknowledge us. At His crucifixion all created things were ashamed of man; the earth was ashamed, and shook to its centre; the sun was ashamed and hid his face; the dead were ashamed and could not sleep in their graves; but Jesus still owned us. Centuries before, looking forward to this hour, and living in it, as if it were

* Mark x. 45.

already the vivid present, He was not ashamed to call us brethren."* "Now," might the spirit-stranger say, "at last, I understand His words, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.'"

Though He sits enthroned on the riches of the universe, and "the clouds are the dust of His feet," His heart is still unchanged, and "we can witness to His praise, His love is still the same." Like the sunshine that falls with magical flicker on pearl and ruby, lance and armour, in the royal hall—yet overflows the shepherd's home, and quivers through the grating of the prisoner's cell—pours glory over the mountain range—flames in playful splendours on the wave—floods the noblest scenes with day, yet makes a joy for the insect—comes down to the worm, and has a loving glance for the life that stirs in the fringes of the wayside grass—silvers the moss of the marsh and the scum of the pool—glistens in the thistle-down—lines the shell with crimson fire, and fills the little flower with light—travels millions and millions of miles, past stars, past constellations, and all "the dread magnificence of heaven," on purpose to visit the sickly weed—to kiss into vividness the sleeping blooms of spring, and to touch the tiniest thing with the gentleness that makes it great:—so does the Saviour's love, not deterred by our unworthi-

* Psalm xxii.; Heb. ii.

ness, not offended by our slights, come down to teach and bless the meanest and the lowliest life in the new creation. He restores the bruised reed; the weakest natures share His visits, and revive beneath His smile. "For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy,* I dwell in the high and lofty place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." All images fall infinitely short of the reality. "Light," said the sage, "is the shadow of God." It is a shadow, and nothing more, of the Divine sun of souls. It does but darkly typify the brightness of His rays, and the visits of His condescension. There is no humility like His humility, for there is no love like His love.

The Saviour seems to have had a peculiar reference to the humility of brotherly love, when He delivered this charge. After the manner of Oriental teachers, He had just been enforcing this humility by a striking symbolical action. He had just reminded His disciples, that although their Lord, His love had made Him their servant. "Then," said He, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Presently, *having* the same idea in His mind, He added, "A

* Compare Isaiah vi. 3, with John xii. 41.

new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

4. If we would love as Christ loves, *our love must be bountiful.* Love can never do enough for its object. Nothing is thought too costly to effect its recovery when lost, or to enrich it with when found. For this purpose it will exhaust all its resources, and rejoice even to give itself away. *You* feel this, yet your love is but the finite mirror of the love that is infinite. When you were lost, "unsearchable riches" were poured forth as the price of your redemption. When you were found, what was the language of the Heart of Hearts? "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Love had for you no mere half forgiveness, no partial endowments; there was no chilling ceremony, there was no hint to sting you with recollections of the past. Argosies of wealth, rocks of diamond, mines of gold, all the treasures that interlace the solid globe, all the glories that glow in the solemn armies of the stars, are not to be compared with the things God has prepared for *you. Think of* the promises; they are all yours.

Think of all the agencies of human instruction, "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas;" they are yours. Think of the world; it is yours. Think of life; it is yours. Think of death;—"I find death named in this inventory," said the dying James Hervey;—death is yours. Think of afflictions; they can only bless you; you are not theirs, they are yours. Think of things present, or things to come; in magnificent over-measure, all are yours. Think of all that is represented by that great word *God;* who can fathom it? "Nothing is easier than to say the word *universe*, and yet it would take us millions of millions of years to bestow one hasty glance upon the surface of that small portion of it which lies within the range of our glasses. But what are all suns, comets, earths, moons, atmospheres, seas, rivers, mountains, valleys, plains, woods, cattle, wild beasts, fish, fowl, grasses, plants, shrubs, minerals and metals, compared with the meaning of the one name GOD!" * Yet God is yours. And all this is the gift of a Saviour's love.

When, therefore, your heart is disposed to give a brother disciple but a scanty and penurious affection—when it asks the questions, How soon may I stop? How *little* may I do? What scheme can I invent to save myself, and yet to satisfy my

* John Pulsford.

conscience?—remember that *ability* is the only measure of Christ's love-service, and that it is only lawful measure of yours. "Freely ye have received, freely give;" "give, speak, work for the brotherhood, wisely, proportionately, but with infinite joyfulness, in *full* measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over."

5. If we love as Christ loves, we shall *breathe a spirit of gentleness and patience towards the erring or offending members* of the Christian brotherhood. The effects flowing from the violation of this principle might fill a library with sad histories. Many a man in the heat of youth, or the vanity of inexperience, has given hasty expression to unsound but unformed and floating speculations, which have been dealt with as the final decisions of infidelity. Many a man who has perhaps inherited a sceptical tendency, and has himself been agonised by doubts which he could not silence, has felt those doubts exasperated into strength by the austere severity of those who should have dealt with him as Jesus dealt with the doubting Thomas; and thus, errors which love could have scattered, have remained to the last, the cloud of life, and the blight of power. The sins of many a sick soul have been raised to a higher fever by angry censure; and reproof, that might have been medicinal,* has

* "God's holy medicinal truth."—DANIEL BURGESS.

only been inflammatory, because it was passionately spoken. "It is too much," says a Puritan father "to expect the patient will receive medicine, not only bitter, but boiling hot." Many a weary backslider has lived for years in desolation, and none of his former companions have sought to restore him in the spirit of meekness. But the Divine Shepherd is ever seeking wanderers from His fold, and is ever at work with winning and delicate patience to restore souls that are weak with the famine, and stung with the reptiles, and torn with the thorns of the wilderness. We are to love as He loves. You are perhaps reminded of the well-known incident related in old ecclesiastical story, respecting the "beloved disciple." A member of one of the churches had been "overtaken with a fault." In desperation, he plunged along into deeper and yet deeper sin; at last he joined a band of robbers, and became their chief. John heard of this. Deeply grieved, he journeyed to the gloomy fastnesses where the robbers had their haunts, and placed himself at their mercy. "Lead me to your captain," said he; and when the bandit saw his former pastor, he fled; but John pursued him, saying, "My son, why fliest thou from thy father, unarmed and old? Fear not; *there* yet remaineth hope of salvation, believe me; *Christ* hath sent me." Then the robber's fierce

spirit melted, he wept and trembled, returned to his Christian companions, and the lion became as a lamb. With a love that seeks and saves that which is lost, and bears with that which is saved; with a love that speaks to the deserter, not with the tones of the tempest, but with "a still small voice," Christ loves the disciples, and in this way they are to love one another.

6. If we love as Christ loves, we shall love *all* the disciples. It should be remembered that Christ is not now speaking of His universal love—that which shines on the just and the unjust, on the thankful and the thankless; that which has made a sufficiency of provision for the ransom of all; that which cries to all the world, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." He is speaking of His peculiar and discriminating love to those who have accepted Him, and who are already partakers of His life. He loves them all, without respect to their weakness or strength, their various gradations of attainment, or complexional diversities of character. None are excluded for their faults, for He loves th[illegible] holiness is yet in its infancy. None [illegible] for their intellectual mistakes, for e[illegible] *whom He was* immediately speaki[illegible]

victims of many while they were yet but receiving the first lines of their education, yet He loved them to the end. And now, although His disciples have only a germinal knowledge of His truth, He loves them, as you love your child none the less because it is now only learning to read, or just beginning, with many a fall, to totter along alone. None are excluded because not connected with some favourite tribe of His Israel; for which of the evangelical denominations can say, "We are the exclusive favourites of heaven; our prayers alone are heard; we dwell in Goshen, others in Egypt; 'light is in our dwellings,' darkness in theirs; as in the miracle wrought for the Hebrew warrior, the dew of the Lord rests on our fleece, and it is 'dry upon all the earth besides;' kings, priests, heroes, martyrs, teachers, saints, are to be found with us alone; and no others are cheered with the light of a Saviour's smile, or the signals of His love?"

He loves all His disciples, and all are His disciples, who, however they differ in other respects, unite in the sentiment, "for us to live is Christ." For a number who glory in this sentiment to part from the rest, and then to call themselves "The Church," is the same as if a number of men were to separate from their fellow-men, and then to call *them*selves "mankind." Without acknowledging *such* a theory, however, we may unconsciously

catch its spirit; we may be great in little things, little in great; and thus magnify a denominational crotchet into a central truth. We may restrict our affection with glowing intensity within some small inclosure. Much of our Christian love would, if subjected to a searching test, prove to be too much like a subtle selfishness, and a disproportionate regard to what is bound up with our own individuality; and we may, almost without knowing it, think of what is identified with ourselves in outward observances, or in local acts of worship, when we should only think of what is identified with Christ. But Christ loves *all* His disciples with impartial affection; and if we love like Him, we too shall love them all.

7. If we love as Christ loves, *our love will last for ever.* Whom He loves He always loves. This is an inference from His nature. His friendship for whatever partakes of the Divine Spirit, must have the immortality of a Divine perfection. All this is so clearly implied in what has already been said, that there is no need for enlargement. Then our love for one another is to be no fickle and wayward impulse; but a never tiring, never resting, never ending life; a life always spending, yet never spent. "Thine own friend and thy father's friend," and more especially thy Saviour's friend, "forsake *thou not;*" "for He has said, I will never leave

nor forsake thee." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed."

III. The NOVELTY of this commandment claims our inquiring thought. The saying of Archbishop Usher, which has already been quoted, was no flash of trivial fancy or eccentric speech. Much may be said in support of it (although little will be said now), as affording an explanation of the Saviour's words, "A new commandment give I unto you."

Under the Ten Commandments, which are graven on the Rock of God's indestructible law, we see cut, in fresh and recent letters, this Eleventh Commandment. They do not include it, it does not include them; it is altogether something additional. Unlike the sentence, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself;" it is not a compendium of the old commandments, but is literally new.

1. It is a new commandment, as it enjoins love after a *new model*. Love had always been commanded, but never before had it been so exemplified. *All* nature had been rich in the types of beautiful

tenderness, and all history had furnished examples of infinite mercy; but never in the oldest archives of love unfolded to the wondering study of man, had there been a record of love like this. Never before had love stooped so low, endured so much, wrought such miracles, or shed such benedictions. Never before had God been able to point to an Incarnation and a Cross, and say, "There, for the love I bore to you, I dwell in that body, and gave myself away in that stupendous sacrifice. Love one another, *as I have loved you.*" This commandment is a "word which we have heard from the beginning" of the Gospel dispensation, but we never heard of it before.

2. It is new in this sense, as it is addressed to a peculiar class of God's subjects, and is a law for the *new creation* alone. The old commandments were given to the world, this new commandment to the church,—the others were for man as man; this is for man as redeemed. It only appeals to disciples; for the model it presents, and the motive it supplies, can only be understood by those who are the recipents of redeeming love. "Love one another, as I have loved *you.*" It only appeals to disciples; for its scope is restricted to their circle of life; by other laws they are bound to love the race, by this, to "love *one another.*" It only appeals to disciples; for it enjoins love like that

of Christ, love the same in its *nature* as His, and this implies participation in His life. "Love *as* I have loved." As it would be impossible for the insect in its chrysalis state to observe the laws which are made for its transformed state—for the worm to know the laws which make the summer fly seek the sunshine and live upon the flower—as it must be "born again," and enter upon a new existence before it can keep the laws of that new existence; so only the new creature can keep this new commandment.

3. It is new, as it arose out of a *new necessity*, and was intended to be the distinguishing sign of Christ's disciples. To prevent confusion, and secure a defined place in society, each office and every class has its peculiar sign. The crown is the sign of the king, and the sword of the soldier. While Christ was speaking, the priest was known by his vestment, the Pharisee by his deep fringe and broad phylactery. The followers of Rabbi Jonathan or Rabbi Simeon, of Hillel or Shammai, or of any other Jewish preacher, were known respectively by some distinctive tenet or peculiar austerity; and as if in reference yet in contrast to all these existing badges of distinction, He decreed that His disciples should also have their *proper* sign, a sign that should outlive all others, *and be* understood in every language. "By this

shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "As every lord giveth a certain livery to his servants, charity is the very livery of Christ. Our Saviour, which is the Lord above all lords, would have His servants known by their badge, which is love."*

4. It is new, as it has a new *impressiveness*—an affecting power all its own. The old commandments had a power to alarm; this, when truly understood, has a power to subdue. They had the thrilling awfulness of pure, stern law; this, the melting charm of love; they smote the conscience, this captivates the heart. "The earth shook, the heavens dropped," and mortal spirits quailed with fear, when the Lawgiver of old descended with all the dread insignia of justice, and all the ceremony of public state, yet there was nothing surprising in this—it was but a mode of Divine manifestation that might have been anticipated; and if we are more impressed by moral than material glory, more moved by love than by terror—as indeed we ought to be—not only is this new commandment mightier in itself, but more awakening in the style of its delivery, than any wonder that blazed, or any word that pleaded over Sinai. For the Lord himself to forsake His throne of beams, which from its very excess of light is to us "a pavilion of

* Latimer.

darkness;" for Him to dismiss His flaming ministers, and lay aside the thunder of His power, to come in the form of a mortal and die the death of a slave, die, though He yet lived;—for Him to do all this, on purpose that He might reveal and proclaim this new law, is a Divine discovery of such startling unexpectedness and infinite pathos, that angels might weep and demons wonder if mortals are unmoved; unmoved, while by this action Jesus says, "Remember my life of love, look at this body in which I have veiled my glory for your sakes, see me setting out to die for you; and now, by my incarnation, by my cross, and by all my love, I charge you to love one another, even as I have loved you. This is *my* commandment; when you think of it, think not of terror, think not of Sinai, think not of Moses, but think of me."

The Presence of God our Rest.*

"Lead thou me on,
Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.
I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou
Should'st lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path, but now,
Lead thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will.
Remember not past years,
So long thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn, those angel-faces smile
Which I have loved long since,
And lost awhile."

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."—EXODUS xxxiii. 14.

TO-DAY we stand on the solemn frontiers of a new year. Pilgrims through time, unlike pilgrims through space, must of necessity be ignorant of the region before them. We have no maps to consult; no reports of previous explorers to study; and can climb no "mount of vision," which commands the prospect of our future path.

* A New Year's Address.

What sights we shall see, what adventures we shall meet, or how near we are to that spot where we must cross the deeps of death, touch the shores of immortality, and learn the secrets of the spirit world, are things which no glance of thought can open, and which no prophet is permitted to foretel. Although these facts are the same on every other day as they are on this, they naturally startle and arrest us with a new sense of their reality, when we are, as now, gliding over one of the lines which measure out our life, and are entering upon a new stage of the way. It is an appropriate time for new praises, resolves, and hopes, but it is also a time when the mystery of the future is likely to give new trouble to the spirit, and fill it with restless and apprehensive thought.

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." This is "a word in season to every one who is weary." Let no poor trembler who casts himself on God's sure truth and unspeakable affection, fear that it is not for him. A promise like this, having relation to elements of good, which are not merely circumstantial or temporary, but which are equally essential in every age, in every age retains its force. It will never become a dead letter from its antiquity; and although addressed in the first instance to a certain individual believer, all who are alike believers

may claim it in a time of similar necessity, because all believers in all times sustain the same relation to God;—one life circulates in all, and they are members of one "body." The promise given to Joshua was also meant for Paul;* the promise given to Moses was also meant for us. There it is on the page, waiting for appropriation. It is as surely ours as if, like the message of the shepherds at Bethlehem, it came to us, with stroke of light and rush of mystic music, straight from the eternal throne.

I. Let us ask in what sense God has said, "My presence shall go with thee." In one sense this is true both with regard to "him that feareth God, and to him that feareth Him not." Go where we will, He is with us, and the place whereon we stand is always "holy ground." The laws, the harmonies, and the forms of nature, are only the modes of His agency, the habits of His existence, and the turns of his thought. Each dew-drop holds an oracle, each bud a revelation, and everything we see is the signal of a living spirit, present, but out of sight. Every whisper of the secret wind that bloweth where it listeth; every colour of the dawning or the dying light; every aspect of the changing seasons; and all the mysteries of

* Compare Joshua i. 5, with Hebrews xiii. 5.

electricity, of vital growth, or of human thought, should make us feel that the Eternal presence is as close upon the soul as the breeze upon the brow, and may well wake up the cry, "Surely, God is in this place. O Lord, thou art very great! The rolling year is full of thee. Whither can I go from thy Spirit, and whither can I flee from thy presence!"

Wherever creation is, God is, though man may be far away. "Shores," says one, "on which man has never landed lie paved with shells; fields which his foot has never trod are carpeted with flowers; seas where he has never dived are inlaid with pearls; and caverns which he has never mined are radiant with gems of finest form and purest lustre." These things are not unseen. The solitude where there seems to be no watchful eye, and no listening ear, overflows with the glory of a thinking, loving, ruling Presence, for God is there, rejoicing in the work of His own hands, and is "doing all things after the counsel of His own will." His Shekinah is hid within the veil, but His train fills the temple; and could our thoughts fly beyond the precincts of created nature, they would find Him even there, for though all things else are limited He is infinite. We cannot, in life or in death, travel out of His presence, however *we may* long to find a shade that can screen us *from* an eye so piercing, and a light so clear.

Since God is everywhere, in what sacred and peculiar sense is He present to the believing heart? "Lord, how is it that thou dost manifest thyself to us, as thou dost not unto the world?" The principle on which He does so, is illustrated by some of the common facts of life. A man is present to his friend, as he is not to a stranger, though he may be at the same moment speaking to both. The light which floods the landscape with a deluge of beauty is present to him who sees it, as it is not to the blind man walking at his side. Music, though it may ripple round the deafened ear, is only present to him who hears it. The discourse of the naturalist on his experiments, of the scholar on his books, of the mathematician who is talking with raptures on the beauties of a theorem, will bring things into the presence of initiated listeners, which are still remote from the minds of those in the very same company who have no sympathy with the theme. So, "two women may be grinding at a mill;" "two men may be in the field;" one a believer, the other an unbeliever; and although the Great Spirit is near to them both, there is a sense in which He is present to the one as He is not to the other; for, in the case of the believer, the causes of estrangement have been taken away, a new relation exists, *a new life has* been born, and God is present as a

Friend, whose love has been accepted, and whose conversation is understoood with all the intelligence of a kindred nature.

II. In what sense does the presence of God give rest?

1. *It tends to give rest from the terror incident to a state of condemnation.* There is no terror like this. Say, if you will, that it only is the terror of a man who is enslaved by narrow notions, and who trembles before the spectres of his own distempered fancy. Call it the mere effect of "Calvinism," or of a "modified Paganism," or whatever else you please; but the facts which the Bible discloses, and which the very existence of the Gospel implies, justify its utmost extremity. It is not, as many would insinuate, a symptom of insanity, but an evidence of dawning reason. Some penitents have declared themselves unable to describe the intense life, the speechless consternation of that hour, when, like the revelations of the lightning in the midnight storm, the flashes of conviction first set their sins in burning distinctness before their eyes. How many are in these circumstances now? How many at this moment are vainly seeking rest —rest from the dismay excited by the first discovery of their helpless sinfulness—rest from anxious forebodings, rest from the weary labour

of a life consumed in trying to expiate sin, or to excuse it, or to forget its existence!

"Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden!" When we have obeyed this voice, and sought the sheltering presence of that Saviour who utters it, whose death has exhausted the penal sorrow to which we were sentenced, whose righteousness supplies our title to eternal life, and through whom alone the inconceivable God makes Himself known to man,—the promise is fulfilled, "I will give you rest." Nothing need alarm us now. We live in the full sunshine of *all* those perfections which are represented by the great word—"God." We need no longer wish to deify the separate attribute of love, nor try, as perhaps we once tried, to believe that God is only infinite love personified. We may rejoice, not only in the presence of love, but holiness smiles upon us, justice sanctions our salvation, and the law confirms it. Salvation is a settled thing; pardon is a past act, and not merely a future possibility. When, day by day, we apply for forgiveness, this is but the daily appropriation of that which is already granted, and the successive expression of that faith which is now the habit of our existence. Perhaps we only faintly appreciate our true position. God is with us, but we hardly *know it; we* therefore know not how rich we are;

how happy we ought to be, or how true it is, that "we which have believed *do* enter into rest." Let us make this fresh "beginning of days" the beginning of a "closer walk with God;" and seek, through the cultivation of a faith more vivid, the enjoyment of a composure more serene.

2. The presence of God will give *rest from the anguish which springs from a discordant nature.* There must be an inward, as well as an outward change, in order to complete our peace. Not the warring elements above the surface, but those beneath it, make the earthquake. It is not the crushing pressure from without alone, but the stormy force within, that creats the anguish of the conscience. The prisoner, restless with fever, requires not only discharge from his confinement, but cure of his malady, to give him rest; there must not only be a work without, but a renovating work within him to hush that moaning breath, and make those tossing arms lie still. While Hercules was wild with agony from the poisoned vest, he might pace the sward beneath the forest arches, plunge into the flowery dingle, climb the mountain steep, and drink the morning breeze, but these outward enchantments could have no soothing power for him until the poison was expelled. Try change of scene; try gaiety; try occupation; try to find some "happy valley"

which no anxiety can enter; try, like Milton's evil angels, the charm of music to "mitigate and suage, with solemn touches, troubled thoughts;" but while there is a deep central discordance, and the very spirit is on fire, and all within is wrong, we may indeed cry, "Peace, peace," but there will be "no peace." Everything we need to secure that peace which the world cannot give, is secured by the promise, "My presence shall go with thee," for that tranquil presence does not merely attend us, it enters the very soul, and sheds its benedictions there. Christians! God is nearer to us than our nearest friend; nearer to us than Christ himself would be, if we *only* felt the touch of His hand and the sweep of His vesture, for He takes up His abode *within* us. Plato seemed to have a glimpse of this glorious truth when he said, "God is more inward to us than we are to ourselves." What was to him a beautiful speculation, is to us an inspiring reality; for we are the "temples of the Holy Ghost." He dwells within us a pitying, purifying friend, to kindle celestial light in our darkness, to speak to us with a still, small voice, to bow the will into cheerful, chosen subjection to Himself, and by removing the cause of discord, and restoring the equilibrium of the soul, to give us peace at the very seat of life. *Ignatius, from his* eminent devotion, was called by

his companions "The God-bearer;" and when Trajan said to him, "Dost thou then bear the Crucified One in thy heart?" his reply was, "Even so; for it is written, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'" This honour have all the saints, yet all do not seem to be fully conscious of it. Only let us feel it; only let us own that inward authority, and listen to that inward voice; only let us act in obedience to the suggestions of that "Power that worketh within us to will and to do of His good pleasure," and we shall find that in proportion as we are actuated by the life of God within us, shall we feel "His peace."

3. The presence of God will tend to give *rest from the cravings of an unsatisfied spirit.* The spirit, like the body, requires not only freedom, not only health, but *food*—food suited to its noble nature. If no provision were made for the hunger and thirst of the spirit, and no appropriate sphere assigned for it, it would still be wakeful with the torture of its disappointed faculties, and weary for its native home. Everything else in creation finds its own element, and, when there, finds rest. The prophet points to "the beast that goeth down into the valley" as the very image of quiet satisfaction.* The cattle down in the green dell, where they find

* Isaiah lxiii. 14.

the pool, the deep grass, and the shade from the blazing day, are at rest, for they have all their nature asks for. The birds that dip in the stream, soar in the light, and twitter from the bough, are at rest, for they are in their own right element. The insect that wavers in the still air, or clings to the sunny spray, is at rest, for it is at home. But man, while apart from God, has exploring thoughts, mysterious aims, and anxious aspirations, which he himself can scarcely interpret, and which earth can never satisfy. "Give, give!" is the ceaseless cry of the spirit. "Is the child happy?" asks one of our Puritan fathers. "He will be, when he is a man. Is the peasant satisfied? He will be, when he is rich. Is the rich man satisfied? He will be, when he is ennobled. Is the nobleman satisfied? He will be, when he is king. Is the king satisfied? Listen! for one is speaking. . . . 'O that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!'"

Mere material good can never satisfy a mental nature, nor mere mental good a nature which is born, not for thought alone, but for love, for worship, and for heaven. Well might Augustine say, "O Lord, thou hast made us for thyself; and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee!" If we understand this promise, and are ready to *receive what* God has in these words declared

Himself ready to bestow, we have found that which will satisfy the mighty want of our life; we have found the "Desire of all nations;" we have found Him who has said, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." There is no finality to the attainments of godliness; there is no bound to the joy of holiness—the joy of knowing, loving, and serving God; there will never be a period in eternity when the spirit will have to say, "Life is now a blank to me, my portion is exhausted, and my rest is gone."

4. The presence of God will tend to give us *rest from the distraction felt amidst uncongenial scenes and associations.* We are naturally more alive to His presence in some scenes than in others. The lonely voyager, pacing the deck when nought is seen around him but the expanse of the moonlit sea; or the traveller in the desert, who finds himself alone amidst the holy silence and stainless purity of nature; will sometimes feel the solemnity of the unseen presence more than he well can bear. When pausing amidst the hedge-rows of some solitary lane, you often say, "Surely 'God is *here*.'" When fevered with study, or worn with midnight watches by some dying friend, you step out into the starlight, look around on the hushed and sleeping earth, and up into the gulf of silence, the gulf of awful beauty, the depth of mysterious perspec-

tive, and you say, "God is *here;* I am sure that I feel His presence now." When cast on the bed of weakness, and the chamber seems to be all your world, you can say without surprise, "God is *here;*" "this is none other than the gate of heaven." But amidst the coarse cares and in the crowded thoroughfare, amidst the tumult and hurry of the wrangling mart, and the throng of hard, stern faces intent on gain, you are in danger of feeling as if God could not be so truly *there.* But is He not so? "Is He a God of the hills, and not of the valleys?" Is He in the dead waste, and not in the crowded city; in lonely nature, and not in human life? Since the world is the sphere in which the greater portion of our existence must be spent, the field where the fight of faith is fought, and the enterprises of conscience carried on, can this be unconsecrated ground; and must we indeed go out from the presence of man, if we would go into the presence of God?* Surely not; for He has said, "My presence shall *go with thee.*" Recollect His presence, and listen for His voice. Know that when your hand is upon the ledger, your eye upon the balance, and your mind strained

* "Thy spirit is around,
Quickening the restless mass that sweeps along;
And this eternal sound—
Voices and footfalls of the numberless throng,
Like the resounding sea,
Or, like the rainy tempest, speaks of thee."—BRYANT.

to its utmost tension in the crisis of duty or the conflict of skill, you speak in His audience, act under His inspection, and may, if you will, be quickened with His inspiring strength. Feel that you have a Mentor, a Prompter, a Comforter infinite in all His adorable perfections, and nearer than the nearest life that you can see; that you can turn to Him at any moment, and look to Him in every climax of embarrassment;—feel this, as you have a right to feel it, and then, will you not have rest?

"It is the presence of the king that makes the court, let the house be never so mean in which he resides. Heaven itself is not heaven merely because its scenes and associations are congenial and inviting to our spirits. He that shall read in the Book of the Revelation of a city or place that has no temple in it, nor no sun or moon to shine in it, and then break off, would sooner conjecture that he was beginning the description of some forlorn place under the northern pole, than of the heavenly Jerusalem. But when he shall understand that God and the Lamb are the temple of it, and the glory of God and the Lamb the eternal light shining in it, he will then say, as an awaked Jacob, 'Surely this is none other than the house of God, and the place where He Himself dwelleth.'"*

* Dr. W. Spurstow. 1666.

If God indeed be with us now, and with us everywhere, although the senses may be only alive to the distractions of an uncongenial sphere, we dwell in the court of the King; and if we seek it, there will be "rest for our souls" there, for He is the "Prince of Peace."

5. The presence of God will *tend to give rest from the disquietude which results from want of human sympathy.* We yearn for sympathy, and soon become weary and spiritless without it. We need the presence of some being with whom we can exchange ideas, and who will receive the confidence of our most secret life; whose quick, responsive, appreciating spirit will be sure to know us, although "the world knoweth us not," and whose glance of intelligence will rightly interpret us, even in those seasons of gloom and perplexity when we misinterpret ourselves. Many a Christian has often to say, "I am a stranger on the earth—a stranger, not only to the distant multitude, but to those whom my daily life seems to touch." Such "a stranger on the earth" was the man to whom these words of promise were spoken. "His soul was like a star, it dwelt apart." He was solitary in the midst of six hundred thousand men. Perhaps not one in that vast multitude had full communion with his spirit, and no man knew him while *he was living*, as "no man knoweth his

sepulchre unto this day." Great prophet as he was, there were times when this want of sympathy made his courage faint, and woke up the distracted complaint—"What shall I do unto this people, for they be almost ready to stone me?" "Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? . . . . I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. . . . . Kill me, I pray thee, out of thy hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness!" There were times when even the mighty spirit of Elijah died within him from a sense of utter loneliness. "I have been very jealous for the Lord of Hosts," thought he, "because the children of Israel have forsaken His covenant, thrown down His altars, and slain His prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." These thoughts stole away his strength; and, as he sat under the juniper tree, he said, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." There were times when Luther, with all his majestic independence, felt heart-broken to be misunderstood by his companions; and there was a passage in his life which he called his "Gethsemane;" "for," said he, "in this black night all the disciples have forsaken me and fled." If the greatest of the sons of men have felt this longing for sympathy, and this distress without it, no wonder if the same

experiences should be felt by many of the weakest and most obscure. Many a child in an unbelieving family, whose faith blooms like "a lily amongst thorns," which lacerate the beauty they conceal; many a Christian mechanic amongst his scoffing comrades; and many a student amongst his sceptical companions; may be at this moment ready to say, "No one understands me. 'No man careth for my soul.' I have thoughts which are as a fire shut up within me, but they must remain unspoken. I can pour my sorrows into no human ear. I am assailed with unbidden doubts, which constantly bring me to a stand, and make pauses in the process of conviction, but which, if known would only bring upon me the brand of infidelity."

But One there is above all others, who understands the sick and suffering spirit; who has Himself felt the "heart of a stranger;" who, in the days of His flesh, "trod the wine-press alone," and was heard to say, "I am alone, yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." That glorious Friend has said, "I will not leave you orphans, I will come unto you." Why do you not more fully trust Him? why think of Him as if He were a thousand miles away? Look up, and you will see the light of His countenance. Listen, and you will hear Him say, "My presence shall go with *thee;*" *and surely* the presence of no mortal friend

can brace the spirit with such strength, or touch it with such soft, magnetic thrills of pleasure.

6. The presence of God will tend to *give rest from apprehensions regarding the future.* Up to the time when these words were spoken to the Hebrew prophet, God had shown His presence to the chosen tribes by signs and wonders. He had thus been with them as their *supporter;* and in a region where there was no fountain for the thirsty lip, and no green thing to sustain existence, He had given them bread from heaven and water from the flinty rock. He had been with them as a *guide;* and had led them along paths of mystery by the symbol of His presence.

> "By day, across the astonished lands
> The clouded pillar glided slow;
> By night, Arabia's crimsoned sands
> Returned the fiery column's glow."

But now, by the worship of the golden calf, they had broken the oath of allegiance to their heavenly King, had set up the banner of independence, and had invited by their sins the final inflictions of judicial severity. Moses was struck with consternation, for he knew that God might righteously withdraw His presence, suspend the action of those miracles by which they had hitherto been *fed* and guided, and leave them to die in the deep *eternal* silence of the desert. To calm these fears

and give his troubled spirit rest, Jehovah said, "My presence shall go with thee."

We are as immediately dependent upon God as were those tribes in the trackless, shadeless waste. Our life is, moment by moment, as much at His mercy—our bread is as much the gift of His power, as was theirs; whether our supplies come in some flash of miracle, or through a million intervening agencies, they come from Him, and from Him alone. When He gives the showers and sunbeams that melt the snow-wreath, tempt forth the tender leaf, and mature the golden grain; when He gives us work to do and power to do it; when He gives those affections of parent or friend which nurse us in our feebleness or feed us in our want,—He gives us our daily bread as truly as if He gave it from the clouds. "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." "The God before whom our fathers did walk, the angel which redeemed us from all evil, hath fed us all our life long unto this day."

But now, perhaps, you have your misgivings. Bleak sights without, bleak thoughts within; winter in the scenery, winter in the soul, winter everywhere, may combine to make this a dreary day to you. Times may be hard; old age may be coming on; and freezing fears of helpless debt may turn your heart into ice. But only let the *Lord be "your* shepherd," and you will not want.

Christ's messages to the poor disciple who is troubled for the future,* were meant especially for you, and have as much particular directness of appeal as if spoken in confidence to you alone. You may say, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me;" and you are present to His thought, not as one leaf in the forest, one wave in the sea, or one poor human unit in the aggregate of life, may be present to the generalising and indiscriminate thought of man, but as a child is present to the thought of his father. Since it is so, and since God's promised help no longer comes through miracles but through appropriate means, use what means may be accessible, and "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." We are to cast, not our work, but our care upon the Lord, for He careth for us; "and if He careth for thee," says Leighton, "be thyself at rest, for why shouldst thou care, and He care too?"

Sometimes disquieting thoughts will arise, not from fear of want, but from doubt as to the true path of duty. The pilgrim is perplexed with by-paths and cross-paths, and is frequently brought to a stand where many paths meet. There are times when truth looks like error, and error like *truth*; and "there is a way which seemeth right

* Luke xii.

unto a man, but the end thereof is death." "Must I, at this crisis, speak, or be silent; stand still, or go forward; be active, or passive?" These are inquiries which rack the spirit with perplexity, and the question which demands immediate decision we are unable to decide. "A sound heart is the best casuist," says Mr. Cecil; but this can only be maintained by communion with God. His constant presence will impart to your spirit a delicate holiness of feeling—a faculty of perception, fine, sensitive, and accurate as instinct—which will be sure in the main to lead you right, and thus God will be your guide. Be at rest, for though you may take a wrong step, you will not take a wrong course. Be at rest, for although your way may be rough, it will be right. Be at rest, for even though you are blind, and can but slowly feel your way, the all-seeing Spirit is with you, "leading the blind by a way they know not." There is a mountain-pass in Switzerland over which the traveller is conducted blindfold. He might lose his footing if he caught but one bewildering glimpse of the chasm below. In like manner, a wise love conceals from us those circumstances that might distract our attention from the immediate line of duty, and withholds the knowledge that might occasion bewilderment and a fall. *We are led along* by sympathetic contact with

God's own Spirit; and our safety depends not on our clear vision of the way, but on our firm grasp of the guiding hand; for "we walk by faith, and not by sight." Let us then be at rest.

The presence of God with us now *is the pledge of perfect rest in the next life.* Our present rest, though real, is not perfect. The presence of God has a tendency to create it, but we are in the presence of a thousand other elements which have a tendency to interrupt it. It is soothing to know that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," but it is the rest of the justified, and not yet the rest of the glorified. It is soothing to live under the sway of His Holy Spirit, but the calming powers of grace are not yet allowed to operate alone and unimpeded; "there is a law in the members warring against the law in the mind," and the spirit has only the rest of convalescence, not of everlasting health. It is soothing to say, "The Lord is our portion," and to feel that it is now our right to enjoy God in all things, and all things in God; but through the sin "that dwelleth in us" we are contented with only partial appropriation of our right, and our rest is, therefore, but the calm of endurance, not the fulness of joy. It is soothing to feel that He is with us in every society, however uncongenial, and in every solitude, *though* lonely as the Dead Sea shore—to know

that He will supply our need from His glorious riches, and guide us on our way to His celestial city,—but still there is a want of harmony between the lot without and the life within; we are yet in the enemy's land—the land of disasters, of temptations, and of blighting cares—and rest on the march—rest on the field of holy war, is not like rest at home. Besides all this, there must be the weariness arising from the frail constitution of our mortal nature. The body was not born again when the soul was, and made by the same wonder-stroke of regeneration a renovated instrument, finely-balanced and exquisitely toned, to suit the renovated soul. Spiritual as we may be, we are still in the "natural body," which is only the suitable vehicle for the "natural man." The soul is redeemed, but we still wait for the "redemption of the body." At present, the frame through which the spirit acts, has infirmities which check its aspirations and detain its flight. When Christ summons us to watch and pray, though "the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak." Owing to an imperfect organisation, mere atmospheric influences, and trifles in themselves as insignificant as the insects of a summer-day, sting the spirit with agony, cloud it with gloom, or vex it into convulsions of impatience. Many sins only reach *it through the* senses, many fiery darts of tempta-

tion first fall and kindle there; and trembling in every fibre of our being, tired out with "the weary strife of frail humanity," the Christian is ready to cry with Paul, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

We are only "delivered from this body" by the act of dying; and when Christ is with us, this is all that we mean by dying. That part of our nature which believes in Jesus can never die. Sickness cannot dissolve—nor fever waste—nor fracture mutilate—thought, fidelity, and love. "Strike on, strike on; thou canst not touch Anaxarchus!" So said the sage to the executioner, who was commanded to destroy him with the strokes of an iron mace; and so we may challenge death. The ship may be broken on the rocks, but the passenger will live and reach the shore; the tent may be levelled to the dust, but the tenant will survive; the believer, when he drops the burden of the flesh, though "absent from the body, is present with the Lord."

If we are but assured of His presence with us now, by the earnest of His Spirit and the tokens of His love, although a prophet were commissioned to say to each of us, "This year thou shalt die!" we know that we shall only die into immortality; *and death* to us would be but the death of sin, the *death of* temptation, the death of every alarm and

every calamity, and would be the introduction to perfect and eternal rest. "For there remaineth a rest for the people of God."

Christians! we may all have rest if we will, for God has said so. Only let us have a clear understanding of what He means; for perhaps after all, He does not mean what you mean by rest. He will not gratify a mere love of ease; a mere indolent wish to be quiet; a readiness to steal moments from duty, that you might give them to self-indulgence; a weak desire to turn your piety into a comtemplative dream, and your "experience" into a delicious haze of mystic meditation. Your life is not to be typified by the "lake-bird, which seeks the stillest waters, lives but to compose its snowy plumage, floats in its solitary calm, is rapt in the reflection of its own beauty, and sings itself to death." The rest which God has to give, is not a selfish and a useless thing, but a thing eminently noble and practical. It is that sedate patience, that tranquil strength, that grand, patrician calm, peculiar to those who live every day in the best society, not of earth merely, but of heaven; and who acquire, through their walk with God, power to see things calmy, to do things calmly, and to bear things calmly. Seek it, that you may give your undivided powers to the service *of the Redeemer;* and that through the enjoyment

of more rest, you may put forth more efficient action. Try, in your measure, to be like those blessed spirits who combine the profoundest repose with the divinest activity; who "*rest*," but "rest *not*;" and who cry, day and night, with all the powers of life as well as language, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!"

Sowing on the Waters.

"Think not God can forget;
Trust in His righteousness—be still and wait.
What if He linger yet?
Thou know'st not what with Him is soon or late.

"He counts not hours with thee,
No sun metes out for Him a daily round;
His time—Eternity!
Death is no mark for Him, the grave no bound.

"Ages His moments are—
A thousand years as nothing in His gaze;
Thy trust is in His care,
And thou may'st find it after *many* days."

"Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."—ECCLESIASTES xi. 1.

THE Book of Ecclesiastes is the autobiography of King Solomon; in which, after recording his mistakes, so that his experience may be instead of our experience, and that we may learn what to *avoid*, he states his conclusions, that we may learn what to *do*. Amongst these practical and directive sentences is the following:—"Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." This line contains a noble principle, which admits

of many applications; we shall select one, and apply it to the Christian instruction of the young. It conveys a charge, registers a promise, and suggests the effects which this charge and this promise should have on our faith and practice.

I. The charge is, "Cast thy bread upon the waters!" Its first reference is to *seed*, for this is what is meant by "bread." Seed supplies poetry with a fit figure to illustrate anything mean which gives existence to anything magnificent. A seed is but a solitary grain, or a soft and trembling flake of vegetation; yet from the seed gushes the bright flower—from the seed starts the towering tree—from the seed springs the bread of life;—from the mournful relics of mortality, sown like seed in the field of graves, called by our Saxon ancestors "God's acre," will spring, at the resurrection day, those organisations, fearfully and wonderfully beautiful and mighty, through which the spirits of the blessed will have sight, voice and speed for ever—from intellectual seeds spring intellectual fruits. "A sentence," says a poet, "has formed a character, and a character has changed a kingdom." In the present instance we would consecrate the image to Christianity. "Now the seed is the Word of God." Christ supplies it. "Christ," writes John Milton, "gives

no full comments, or continued discourses, but speaks oft in monosyllables, as a master scattering the heavenly grain of his doctrine, like pearls, here and there, requiring a skilful and laborious gatherer." Only from the lips of Christ, and from those whose utterences were instinct with the light of Christ's own spirit, do we obtain those gleanings of precious and suggestive thought which God will vitalise and make the seeds of heaven. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved:" that is a seed. "He that believeth in me, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water:" that is a seed. "Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and the door shall be opened:" that is a seed. Out of these, and other thoughts, conveyed by the apparatus of instruction from mind to mind, spring spiritual plants, which flourish amidst the experiences of life, as in alternations of storm and sunshine, gathering strength from the shade, beauty from the light, and freedom from the breeze.

A second reference in the charge is to the *sowing:* "cast" the seed. Weeds are self-dispersive, and have a frightful facility of growth; but fruits are God's blessing on labour. The winds of circumstance may float and scatter the thistledown of sin; but the hand of intelligence and piety must sow the seed of truth. In mental, as well as in

material nature, we have no accidental harvests; no unsown fields appear, rich with waving glory, at the glance of a wish, or the indolent mutter of an incantation, simulating prayer. The rule is, that we must drop the seed—that is, the truth in principle, if we would reap the harvest—that is, truth in practice. The rule, not the exception, must regulate the life. Men whose lives most perfectly obey this rule are the brightest ornaments of the church, and the best reformers of society. A distinction has been made between a radical reformer and a seminal reformer. The one strikes the axe at the *roots* of evil; the other sows the *seeds* of good. The first mode of action, though often a necessity, is frequently connected with disadvantage; for, in tearing up the ravelled roots of an ancient grievance, growing in a tangled place, we may rend and wither delicate interlacings that we wish to live; but sowing seed disturbs nothing—injures nothing; frets no weakling—startles no alarmist; and works a change the most complete, by a process soft as the flush of spring, and noiseless as the laws of nature.

It is matter of deep regret that not a few, who should be workers in that "field which is the world," are, through imperfect views of Christian *obligation*, and a wrong ideal of Christianity, only *angry lookers*-on. Some are inactive because they

treat religion as a question of metaphysics; they cannot reconcile God's decrees with man's free agency, and therefore they will not act. They should remember that decrees which God has hid in the reserves of the infinite solitude, could never be intended to supply a rule for our action, since we know not what they are; but that one decree, obviously meant for such a rule, we do know, and it is this—"Cast thy bread upon the waters." Others are inactive because they treat religion as an affair of emotion; they tell us to say more of "experience," and less of activity. They wrong their favourite word, "experience," by only allowing it a fraction of its proper meaning. If applied to religion, it should certainly be applied to the whole of religion; but they refer it merely to its emotional life. A Christian should have experience in practice as well as in feeling; and feeling can have no value except as it touches into life electric thrills of thought, or vital faculties of power. When you speak of an experienced machinist, you never mean a man whose life burns out in soft regrets, or indolent ecstacy, in thinking about plans of machinery that have no existence except in "dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;" but you mean one who, by keen thought and hard labour, has acquired constructive skill and practical *sagacity; so* when you speak of an experienced

Christian, you mean not a mere man of feeling, but one who, from years of fresh and thoughtful delight in the service of the Saviour, understands Him, and is experienced not only in feeling—in the excitements of the animal mechanism—and in sensations produced by the changes of the weather, but in ploughing the soil and sowing the seed. If you would honour the Saviour who can strengthen you to do all things, leave the world better than you found it, and gain by the play of spiritual power a strong, athletic spirit, "Work while it is called to-day;" sow ideas, sow truths, sow thoughts suggested by God's own Spirit, whose blossoms will soon "make the wilderness rejoice, and solitary places glad."

The third reference in the charge is to the place where the seed is to be cast: "Cast it upon the waters." Allusion is made to a fact in the natural history of Egypt, with which, as Egypt was called the "granary of the nations," all the ancients of the East were familiar. For three months, while the annual overflow of the Nile lasted, the country was one resplendent sheet of water; and, crested with temples or planted with trees, the elevations rose above the waves like green islands sleeping in a silver sea. During the recession of the flood, the labourer cast seed upon the waters, to sink in the alluvial sediment below, expecting in time to

see the river fringed with sweeps of glistering leaves, the silent prophecy of harvest. Or, perhaps, the royal preacher might have had reference to the historical river of the Hebrews, for during the "swellings of the Jordan" similar experiments were made, with a view to similar results. As the seed fell on the soft and porous soil beneath the water, your hints may drop into yielding and receptive natures. Part with your most precious knowledge, then; venture to sow it in faith on the waters of thought; it may find a lodgment, dart the fibres of life in secrecy, and in due time reappear in those practicalities which most beautify and bless the world.

II. The promise, "Thou shalt find it after many days." "Thou shalt *find* it;" therefore you may be at first inclined to think it lost;—after *many days;* therefore you need not be strengthless with the chill of discouragement if it should not be found at once. Perhaps, indeed, you have been sowing the wrong seed, or at the wrong season, or in the wrong spirit, and then it can occasion no wonderment that the promise of what shall follow the right course is not fulfilled in connexion with the wrong. But even if upon the whole you should be right, you may be sorely tried. You may often look *wistfully* into the "waters" of the child's

transparent spirit, and "hope against hope," to see in the sunny depths some gentle shoots of promise, some signs of an educated conscience, or some "good thing towards the Lord God of Israel;" and if, while you are fevered and weary with waiting, friends seem to withhold their sympathy, and scoffers cry, "What will this babbler," this *seed-gatherer** say, you may be on the point of resolving, like the prophet, that "because the word of the Lord is a reproach," "you will speak no more in His name." But take courage: God has not forgotten His promise; every process asks for time: "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die;" it must pass through the action of some kind of mental chemistry, it must mix with other influences, it must long unfurl and ramify in mystery and silence, and you are not to faint because you are unable to reap in sowing time.

Here and there the spiritual life may spring and mellow early, for it is written, "the child shall die a hundred years old;" but in most instances its appearance will be "after many days." While you speak in agony to save, you may seem speaking to vacancy—the young spirit is not listening, it is not there, it is far away in chase of of a merry fancy; or if present, having scarcely risen to the *life of* thought, it has not taken in your meaning.

* Σπερμολόγος, Acts xvii. 18.

Yet when, "after many days," that boy reaches some crisis of being, the sudden remembrance of this very word may startle him as if a sweeping spectre spoke, and save him from a crime; or, later still, when white hairs overhang that brow, some look or tone, trivial in itself as the "cock-crowing" heard out in the field when the Saviour was before the bar of Pilate, will bring to his mind the words of the Lord through your voice, in such a way as to make him "go out and weep bitterly," and become "as a little child." Or, yet later, when amidst tearful faces, muffled whispers, and unseen angels, his spirit flickers in the dying frame, and is just melting into eternity, things learnt in childhood, which seemed to have become dead and withered thoughts, may unfold their secret life, and in one crowded and awful instant the bud of grace may flash into a flower of glory. Perhaps while we are speaking there may be missionaries sounding the triumphant messages of salvation, under the "shadow of some great rock in a weary land," who received their first, best thoughts in a Sunday school. Perhaps, after many centuries have passed away, you may find in your conversations among the glorified that some angel, then walking in brightness by the "river of the water of life," instructing spirits there, *received the germ* of a new existence on "that dim

spot which men call earth," from seed cast by you, when "going forth and weeping." Be assured, that if you find not the results of Christian service on earth, you will find them in heaven.

Matthew Henry, "in weakness and fear, and much trembling," wrote his matchless "Commentary." A writer has said of it, "It has now lasted for more than one hundred and thirty years, and is at this moment more popular than ever, gathering strength as it rolls down the stream of time; and it bids fair to be *The Comment* for all coming time. True to God, true to nature, true to common sense, and true to the text, how can it be superseded? Waiting pilgrims will be reading it when the last trumpet sounds, 'Come to judgment.'" When the expositor was a child, he received much impression from a sermon on the parable of the "mustard seed." On returning home he said to his child-sister, "I think I have received a grain of grace." It was the seed of the Commentary "cast upon the waters."

Who can trace the history of a single thought? Its transmission from soul to soul, its manifold influence and infinite connexions; its flowers of light, its fruits of righteouseess, its leaves for the healing of the nations; its thousand meanings, its thousand powers, and its thousand seeds, making a thousand centres of similar existence; its history

on earth, its history in heaven, unfolding with every unfolding page in the history of innumerable spirits that can never die! That thought is a single seed "cast upon the waters."

III. What effects should this charge and this promise have on our faith and practice?

We must aim to sow the *right seed.* We should make unceasing search for this till we find it, and be anxious not to fall into a mistake with reference to such a primary condition of success. In trying to clear an intricate question like this, we may best help to show what the right thing *is*, by first showing what it is *not.*

Instructions relating to the distinctive forms and rules of any church system are not the right seed. These things may include important truths, and affect the healthy development of truths more important still; but they are rather to be classed with the accidents of religion than with its essential vitalities; Christianity can exist without them, and they can exist without Christianity. We are not now saying that a child should not be educated as a Churchman or a Dissenter; but that this, if connected with, is distinct from educating him to be a Christian. It may be right to explain, according to the light of our own conscience, those laws of Christ which Christians, loyal as ourselves,

have differently interpreted; but, at the very best, this can never form the root-element of the Christian life; and when we give these matters such a prominence, or teach them in such a way as may lead our pupil hereafter to limit his sympathies within one particular sect, we might as well expect "grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles," as that such seeds of strife should spring and ripen into "fruits of peace."

Instructions which have little of Christianity besides the name—which leave out its mysterious facts and evangelical features—which proceed on the principle that the Bible does not so much reveal the religion of salvation as explain the religion of innocence, and which chiefly teaches moral laws—cannot form a right seed. Like husks, they are only seed in semblance, and to utter them with any serious expectancy of a spiritual harvest, is only to be a solemn sower of chaff.

Instruction which only relates to some isolated element of Scripture—doctrinal apart from practical, or practical apart from doctrinal—cannot be a right seed. The worst errors of the worst times in ecclesiastical history may be traced more or less to this partial teaching. It is like making a chemical analysis of the seed, and then sowing a selection from its separated particles; a part only of the original combination will not answer the

purpose. "As oxygen alone will never make the atmosphere, or hydrogen alone will never make the ocean, or red beams alone will never make the sun, so one fact, or one set of ideas, will never make the truth. A truth, by abiding alone, becomes to all intents an error." *

What, then, is the right seed? It appears to be this alone—teaching in its history and its connections the fact that "Jesus Christ is the Saviour of sinners." This is the one truth which swam through mist and twilight before the eyes of earliest seers, and lightened with burning distinctness of tracery before the latest, but charmed the thought of all; forming the one continuous Revelation—"the alpha and omega—the beginning and the ending—the first and the last;"—the central fact of the Bible, giving meaning to its mysteries, and motive to its laws.

This fact is beautifully adapted to impress a child, and in very early times it was taught to children; for even under the law the Jews were required to converse with their children on the most vivid and picturesque of the types which foreshadowed it. "And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say it is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover." Surely this

* Dr. Hamilton.

was a command in general language to teach children all they knew of this past and prospective allusion to sin and a Saviour; and accordingly, on some evening near the festival, the mother in the nursery, or the father out in the light of sunset, sitting under the trellice-work of his "vine and fig tree," would tell the wondering child, that when the Israelites were about to depart from the land of slavery, God, in holy anger, sentenced that the first-born children of their pitiless masters should all die suddenly at midnight, but that each poor Hebrew slave should be spared such a stroke, on condition that he killed a lamb, and sprinkled the blood of the weak victim about the doorway of his cabin;—that at length, in the dead of night, amidst the toll of the winds, and the sob and creak of the trees, the angel of death swept unseen over the land, threw his eye of fire over the infant in his beauty, and the youth in his pride, making them tremble, sicken, and expire;—that each Israelite having obeyed the law relating to the mysterious lamb was safe; and though at the moment of awful interest, his brain grew dark, and his heart stood still, "no plague came nigh his dwelling;" the infant woke not in the cradle; "the youth fainted not, neither grew weary;" the cry of death rose not; "Rachel was not heard weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, be-

cause they were not;" and that this great salvation was all owing to the sprinkled blood of the lamb.

We may fairly imagine that the child would listen to this story with eager and suspended soul, and that while his mind was solemn, tender, and awake in all its faculties, the teacher, who was "waiting for the consolation of Israel," would show him how God's red wrath would *pass over* the spirits of the guilty, if they trusted in that nameless and mighty Saviour, of whom the lamb of the passover was a material prophecy.

"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;" and if the ancients were to teach the young members of the community what was revealed of this fact, should our teaching on this essential point be less explicit, now "that which is perfect is come?" or have children fewer privileges now than they had then? Impressive to a child as the Hebrew story that revealed the Saviour was, the fact, now it is more distinctly known, is infinitely more appealing; for though it is connected with reasons hid in recesses of light which are too dazzling even for a seraph's eye to pierce, it has historical aspects so winsome with touching love and pictorial beauty that nothing can be more adapted to arrest a child's thought, or live in a child's memory.

We have just said that to sow the right seed *we should* teach this fact "in its history and

connexions." Its connexions include the whole of Christian doctrine and Christian precept. If any should hesitate to accept this statement, believing that precept only should be given, and that doctrine is something which requires too much thought to be received by our nature while almost in its elementary simplicity, let it be remembered that grave and formidable as the word "doctrine" may sound, doctrine is only a deduction from fact—that "doctrines," things to be believed, and "precepts," things to be done, are only easy inferences from the solemn and captivating story of the cross; and that we only say that they should be taught gradually, "line upon line, here a little and there a little," as the life unfolds.

We should aim at the *best way* of teaching. A wrong way of doing a right thing may greatly hinder, if not utterly prevent success. "A cripple in the right way," says Lord Bacon, "will beat a racer in the wrong." This quaint speech conveys a serious meaning, and will gravely apply to the work in question. We are not about to offer any rules for the right way of teaching, but simply to suggest those general principles that will weave their own rules—rules sufficiently flexible to meet every emergency. The main and master *principle* is love. The secret of Dr. Arnold's *ascendency* as a teacher, was the love that charmed

his pupils into friends. Love has a certain enchantment of its own, which few can always and utterly resist. Speaking in the prison, through the winning words and works of Sarah Martin or Elizabeth Fry, it made eyes glisten that had not wept for years;—it spoke to the rock, and made the waters flow. Speaking in the school, it will reach the dullest, tame the wildest, and melt the proudest spirit. Where love exists it must betray its presence: no art can simulate its light, so as to deceive the child, and no ruggedness of nature can hide it from the child's quick eye. It will stream through all the infelicities of feature, speech, or circumstance, like sunshine through a stained and dim transparency, or the glory of Christ's transfigured form through the poor garments that were afterwards parted at the cross, making them "exceeding white, as snow." Shining through many natural disqualifications for teaching, love will enlighten and enchant.

Love will also, more than anything else, tend to empower what disqualifies, and create efficiency. It will set mind in motion. It will "endow the plain-tongued man with heavenly eloquence." * It will inspire the impatient spirit

> "To try each art, reprove each dull delay,
> Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way."

* Nicholas Udall.

It will supply an adequate and enduring motive for toil. Work for Christ is not to be a convict labour, but a labour of love; it is not to be the work of a machine kept in action by foreign force, but the high impulse of affectionate, adoring life. Instructive and laborious Christianity can be nothing but love, speaking and working; love with its hand on the plough; love "going forth and weeping, bearing precious seed." Love will create the will and command the force to adapt instruction to the youngest, moving the teacher not only as a matter of rule to use simple words and convey first elements, but giving him a quick sympathy and vivid power of realisation, by which he will be able to enter into the young spirit of his charge, feel with it, live in it, and learn how he may to "the youth become as a youth, and to the infant an infant, so that by all means he may win some." This faculty of adaptation is not such a commonplace thing as the crowd suppose. Little spirits, who would pass for great, are afraid to risk the loss of what small imitations of dignity they have, by thus becoming children to teach the child. The stateliest beings do this with most grace and nature, for it is the property of greatness to condescend. Homer pictures his ideal hero doffing *his helmet* before lifting his infant, because it clung *crying* to its nurse,

"Scared at the dazzling helm and gleaming crest."

The Gospel shows up the same principle in yet more brilliant relief, when it represents "the Captain of our Salvation," who inspired the awful seers, and who leads mighty spirits to living fountains of water, laying aside the "terrors that make afraid," inviting the little child to smile in His face, whispering a blessing over it, and saying, "Suffer little children to come to me." The whole of Revelation is love condescending to adapt instruction to infants—for what are men but spirits in the infancy of their beings; and what is the Bible itself but a first book, giving such information of heavenly things as can be conveyed in the imperfect languages of earth, of such a kind, and in such degrees as may be adapted only to our present wants and our present powers? "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings," so the Lord deals with men. After reading this verse of glorious poetry, we almost see the bird balancing in light; the frightened eaglets she has excited to motion, fluttering about the tattered nest and in the open sky; we see her sweep below and catch them on her feathers when they sink through weakness, surge upward with them, drop them again, and by successive experiments of gentleness teach them, till *they can* float majestically away into the deep

of heaven. Let this scene live for ever in our chambers of imagery, to remind us of what God's love has done for us, of what our love should try to do for others, and especially of the way we should adapt ourselves to the wants of young, undeveloped, tender spirits, that we may stir them to think, and teach them to fly.

If we would have a love equal to such demands, we must ourselves love Jesus; if we would so teach Him as to enchant, we must be first enchanted, for only as we do anything for the Saviour's sake shall we do it in the Saviour's spirit. This overmastering love to Christ made him, from whom the disciples fled as from a minister of death, become "gentle among them, as a nurse cherisheth her children." The spirit which led Luther to write over all his letters, whatever might be their theme, the one word "Jesus," made him such an efficient sower of seed that the harvests resulting from his life are among the noblest earth has seen: and if we would have power with God, and power with man, we also must write the name "Jesus" over all we do—the name to inspire the living action, and beautify the thoughts that stream from the dying eye.

We should aim to look to the *right quarter for success.* Pope Adrian the Sixth had this inscription sculptured over the gate of a College which he

founded—"Utrecht planted me, Louvain watered me, and Cæsar gave the increase." In essence, if not in form, we may sometimes repeat this ancient folly. The inscription our spirits put on the favourite monuments of their toil, sometimes only speaks of man: it really looks as if only man is thought of, and that only man is praised. When we are intent on the study of the structure, or the application of the forces of those means which seem to us almost the perfection of instrumental fitness, we are tempted to think too much of that fitness, and to place the trust in the "wheels" which should only be given to the spirit that impels their motion.* When we have been working for God in what appears to be beyond a question the "right way," we say a harvest *must* be the result: success will follow such teaching with all the certainty of law. We are not to forget that "God gives the increase," and that man alone, like the cypher alone, is nothing. He is not able to manufacture a single seed, nor to give it a particle of vitality, but only to sow it. Every blade of corn is a creation; every harvest that ripples in the wind is an answer to the creating voice. Everything in spiritual, no less than natural life, springs at the call of the Creator. Can man create? If not able to create a solitary leaf, how

* Ezekiel i. 16.

can he create a Christian? Deep convictions of weakness should induce that humbleness which is described in the touching Hebrew phrase as "walking softly;" it should incline us to go alone, as well as in crowds, to the throne of Him who says, "Behold I make all things new," and ask for the efficiency that His Holy Spirit gives. Here is the secret of our strength. Prayer makes "the feeble as David."* The prayerless man of power, whose name "is chanted in song and remembered in story," may change the surface of society, and by the prowess of his single spirit "shake the nations;" but he who is deemed the powerless man of prayer, may be the conductor of that power which "shakes not the earth only, but also heaven." "He moves the arm that moves the universe," and the effects of his secret life will be seen in the day when "the wilderness is as the fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted for a forest."

We should aim to use the *right rule for estimating success.* It is true that "Bread cast upon the waters will be found after many days;" but these words contain no assurance that it will be found on earth. It may not re-appear in the earthly lifetime of the sower, but, as an unseen spirit, he *may* watch it spring from age to age.

* Zech. xii. 8.

This view of the case should check our own impatience and discouragement. No Christian sees on earth more than a few specimens and first fruits of the harvest that he sows. If it were possible for him to see more than this, he would be "exalted above measure;" but it is as impossible as that the history of the Infinite should be told in a moment. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold! the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain."

The rule, that we must look far into the future to find the consequences of present actions, will also save us from unfair valuations of what others do. Here and there we see, in the school or the church, a man whose memory brims with all the resources of lettered and sanctified genius, and whose life appears to be one long impulse of love, but whose labour seems almost without effect. When he dies, we see a man of meagre thought and shallow feeling occupy the very same place, amidst every evidence of social and triumphant success. One is like the person who, after careful selection of seed, carefully sows it; waits anxiously while the earth is swept with tempests and shrouded with snows—showing no beauty but *the sparkling* clod, and no life but the frosted tree;

who, with shadows crossing his countenance, often looks at the weather-glass, watches the sky and paces the field, but who dies before the shoot of the first green gleam: the other is like the stranger who, when all this is over, only reaps the harvest. It is unfair to treat the former only with respectful pity, and to think the latter alone "the man whom the King delighteth to honour;" for, in fact, he only finds what another "cast upon the waters;" his fame is secondary and his success reflected. Men may often glorify the reaper; God, when we least expect it, may often shed the brightest favours on the sower. "One man soweth and another man reapeth." "Even he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." If the rewards of spiritual reaping are glorious, much more will those of spiritual sowing exceed in glory.

Let us aim to obey this message from God *in our daily sphere of life;* for though it applies with great force to those who are by profession engaged in religiously educating the young, it was never meant to have such a reference alone. It speaks, for instance, with a special emphasis of authority to fathers and mothers. You, dear friends, are the natural teachers of the child, and there can be *no transfer* of the responsibility; other teachers *are but your* instruments in the performance of the

noble duty. Your influence, as it is the earliest, may be the most effective. The germs of what may afterwards qualify for the professor's chair, may often be acquired at the mother's knee. Well may she say of her sleeping infant—

> "A silent awe is in my room;
> I tremble with delicious fear;
> The future, with its light and gloom—
> Time and eternity are here."

It is likely that, in the case of the great man whose charge we are now studying, those spring buds of piety that withered in the atmosphere of sin, and those ripe fruits "found after many days" in this book, were the issuings of seed "cast upon the waters" by his mother; for she used to call him "the son of her vows," and he says, "I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother." Augustine and Gregory both owed their conversion to their mothers. Innumerable histories like these, though forgotten on earth, are registered in heaven. Perhaps it was intended that the diligent searchers of the Scriptures should find one such fact in the early life of Moses. Inspiration tells us that when the poor Hebrew mother hid her child amidst the grass and flags bordering the Nile, it was an act of faith. After she was appointed by the princess

to nurse that child, the same faith would by its necessary action lead her to syllable simple instructions, like seeds, into its opening mind; and as she watched from the palace lattice the green corn or the flowering lotus, and remembered that this beauty sprang from a seed "cast upon the waters" by art or nature, which, finding root in their silent depths, after many days rose to mantle with its leaves, and colour with its rich reflections, the wave in which once it seemed to die—she saw in these clustering gems of floral existence, types of the results of what she then was doing. For surely it is not unreasonable to think that her instructions have re-appeared in the words and deeds of one whom God inspired to be the Historian of Creation, the Lawgiver of Israel, and the Shepherd of Men, whose thoughts, lighted by God's own Spirit, are woven into the tissue of all revelation; whose name is mentioned with reverence on almost every shore the ocean laves; and who, as he is great in the history of earth, will be great in heaven, for even there they "sing the song of Moses and the Lamb."

Even those who are neither teachers by parental duty nor official engagement, are bound, if they know anything of Christ, to attempt in some way *the diffusion* of that knowledge. All who know a *little* must teach those who know a little less, all

must try and do something to honour God and elevate mankind. The season is nearly over, and now, "Opportunity is narrowed."* "The night cometh." If you have but one talent, use it—if you have but one seed, sow it. You are not able by some sublime achievement to save a nation, but you can sow a seed; and as an acorn contains the future forest and a spark the brilliant light, that seed, by transmission to another spirit, may become eternal life. The separate influence, indeed, of one effort may be small, but that combined with other efforts may have influences almost infinite. Many atoms make a star—many trifles make a life—many moments an age; myriads of drops refract the rush of sunlight over the expiring storm, and brighten it into that arch of rays, at the sight of which the infant claps its hands, and the old disciple silently repeats the promise, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease;" and so, innumerable wise words and kind actions, insignificant as atoms, moments, or drops in themselves, and sown like little seeds on the waters of thought, when quickened by the power of the Highest, will bring about those times which have been so long foretold through the poet's chant and the prophet's fire; times, the very thought of which seems to pierce the spirit with

* *Ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστὶν*, 1 Cor. vii. 29.

delight, and whose glories shall wake the thunders of that harvest-song in which all happy voices must mingle, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ;" "Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever."

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

"Solemn Troops and Sweet Societies."*

"Thy saints are crowned with glory great,
They see God face to face;
They triumph still, they still rejoice—
Most happy is their case.

"There David stands with harp in hand
As master of the quire;
Ten thousand times that man were blest
That might this music hear.

"*Te Deum* doth Saint Ambrose sing,
Saint Austin doth the like;
Old Simeon and Zachary,
Have not their song to seek.

"There Magdalen hath left her moan,
And cheerfully doth sing
With blessed saints whose harmony
In every street doth ring.

"Jerusalem, my happy home!
Would God I were in thee;
Would God my woes were at an end,
Thy joys that I might see."

"The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads."—Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

IT is no easy task to decipher the hieroglyphs inscribed on that great obelisk of prophecy—"The Book of the Revelation;"—yet we shall stand convicted of perilous indolence if we leave

* Lycidas, 179.

them unstudied, because they are difficult to read. The sentence, into the meaning of which we are now invited to search, is the following:—"The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." As, in the writings of the prophets, one and the same prediction sometimes points to some near event in the history of Israel, and some remote event in the history of the universal church —just as our Lord speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world as if they formed one fact, and employs but one description to show forth both scenes; so here, it is thought by many, one stroke of mystical picture-language serves to show what in future ages the church shall be, partially in this world, completely in another. This, most likely, is the true interpretation. The words speak of heaven, and, in their full sense, of heaven alone. Heaven, therefore, is our subject. Let us endeavour—

I. TO INTERPRET THIS VISION OF THE THRONE OF HEAVEN.

John, being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," and looking not with the eyes of the body, but the eyes of the Spirit, sees amidst the imageries of a grand and awful dream, an object which he calls

the *throne;* the throne, not of undefined and invisible Divinity, but "the throne of God and the Lamb." Like the "Angel in the Sun," though a sight more wonderful than anything that poetry can feign, the form of Him who is called the Lamb is the only form that stands revealed amidst those central splendours of heaven. And who is He? Who but the Friend and Guest of sinners? Who but the Being that once said, "I am a worm and no man: the scorn of men, and the outcast of the people?" Who but the soft and gentle incarnation of mercy, to whom the prophet pointed when he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world?" Once He was thought to be only the carpenter of Nazareth; He breathed our air, and spoke our speech; His feet dipped in the burning dust and the dewy sward; hungering, He once plucked ears of wheat from the standing corn; weary, He sat on Jacob's well, and asked for water; at one time, with kindly eye He watched the sports of "children sitting in the market-place;" and at other times He lingered on the woody slope and in the lily-silvered vale, to "consider the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field."

Try to realise all this to the utmost, that you may have a living faith in His humanity. Traveller! *He* used to sail on those gleaming waters, and to climb *that* mountain stair; His form once cast a

shadow over bush and brake, and wavering leaves, in the very dell through which you now are riding; there lay the loose stones which men took up to cast at Him, and in some lone hollow amongst yonder hills, His head "was often filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night," while He continued all night in prayer. He was once compassed about with all the fears and straits of our mortal nature; "and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to the glory of God the Father."

The occupancy of the throne is, however, described in words of unknown significance. They hint at a peculiar distinction existing in the enthroned nature, for we read of *God and* the Lamb; yet with equal force they proclaim its unity, for we read not of *their* throne, but of *His* throne; not of *their* servants, but of *His* servants; they do not serve *them*, but *Him*. The key to this deep wonder is hid in the memorable sentence of the oracle, "I and my Father are one." Who shall presume to explain that secret law—that sublime originality of being—which is here dimly intimated?

What doubter shall dare to say, "Unless I put my finger into the mystery, and thrust my hand into its side, I will not believe?" God's name is a name which "no man knoweth." To play with it in the spirit of familiar, almost of contemptuous intimacy, to make it the subject of mere scientific dissection, is the folly of those who "rush in where angels fear to tread," and "the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." "Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High, whom, although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His name, yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not as indeed He is, neither can know Him; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence, when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness beyond our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon earth; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few."* We have only to do with the practical uses of the truth which this text reveals; and they are these: He who is in the midst of the throne is *King;* He who is in the midst of the throne of Heaven is *God.* "And is He a God of the hills, and not the God of the valleys?" No, surely. As He is the only God those clear spirits can ever see, He is the only

* Hooker.

God, *we* shall ever see. As He has the right to claim, command, and reward the highest service that life in its highest perfection can render, He has a right to *ours;* as He is Master there, He is Master *here.*

II. Let us now try to IDENTIFY THE HAPPY BEINGS WHO ARE BEFORE THE THRONE. Who are they, and how were they introduced into the station of honour which they occupy? At an early stage in the history of these unfolding visions, this question was asked, and we all remember the reply: "One of the elders said unto me, What are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple." Such is the information which the seer receives and records respecting those who "circle the throne rejoicing;" and it is of the same company that He is speaking now, for He says "their names are written in the Lamb's book of life." They are not the aboriginal inhabitants of heaven; they *are not* sons of the morning, who have kept their *first* estate—those elder brothers in the family of

spirits, who may say to the Father, "Lo, these many years do we serve thee, neither transgressed we at any time thy commandments;" they are not the natives of some calm star that glimmers upon our path of midnight meditation—tribes of strangers who have travelled to present their tribute to the King from some far distant spot in space, where none have ever sinned, none have ever wept, none have ever died, but they are *men;* they are related to us by ties that survive the grave; though they traverse unchallenged those most sacred places of creation, they well remember earth—they remember at this moment how earth's mornings dawned, how earth's landscapes bloomed, how earth's Sabbaths smiled, for they were once here. Some of them trod the same pathways, turned over the same leaves of the same books, lifted the same homely latch, knelt in the same hushed, shadowy chamber of prayer as ourselves.

> "Once they were mourning here below,
> And wet their couch with tears;
> They wrestled hard, as we do now,
> With sins, and doubts, and fears."

All that is familiar to us was once just as familiar to them—they clung to it as fondly; like us, they were afraid of the mysterious spirit-land; afraid of death, as the wrench from everything dear and *bright, and* sometimes were half afraid of heaven.

for when thinking of it, there were moments when sweet awe was heightened into consternation, and they shrank back from its strange, terrible, blinding beauty, as from something they were not prepared to see.

These considerations have immense practical value; they help to make our heaven our home. The thought of the Son of Man and of our glorified human companions there, is a thought that makes even our domestic affections cluster in heaven—a thought which, while it tends to quicken the aspirations of the most joyful spirit, is adapted to fire the hopes of the most despondìng. For these servants in the eternal temple, so strong with heaven's strength, wise with heaven's wisdom, and radiant with heaven's purity, were once no wiser than we are, no stronger than we are, no better than we are. If then, they are saved, why should we be lost?—if they overcame through the blood of the Lamb, why may not we?

III. Having identified the "people saved by the Lord," let us proceed to study THE GLIMPSES HERE AFFORDED OF THEIR IMMORTAL LIFE. This text is like "a door opened in heaven," through which we catch a glimpse of its inhabitants and how they live.

1. We see, first, their high vocation. Being

before the throne of God, "they serve Him." What kind of service do they render? As to its *mode* we must be silent. We know no more of their mode of existence, and, consequently, of service, than we know of the inhabitants of Jupiter or Sirius. "They are as the angels of God"—those wondrous beings, of whose subtle nature the clearest flame and the swiftest breeze are the best types and representatives to our minds—beings whose forms are so interfused with glory, that if one were to flash into our company now, as into the presence of the prophet or priest of other days, his lightening might strike our minds with darkness, and our frames with fainting; and who amongst us can by searching find out the kind of service performed by beings so strange and so exalted? We can only venture to name some of the general principles by which their service is distinguished.

It is distinguished by *activity*. For what is a servant? Is he one who spends his existence in raptures, in reveries, or in the contemplation of his own emotional life? Is he one who wastes all his days in mere sorrow over his master's frowns, or mere joy at the thought of his master's smiles? Is he the steward who leaves his accounts in confusion, the porter who forsakes his watch, or *the workman* who sits down in the midst of his

unfinished work to indulge in dreamy meditation on his own ecstacies or agonies or apathies? Such, with some, seems to be the perfect standard of a Christian; but is it the true ideal of a servant? Judged by the laws of common sense, service is a practical, not a sentimential thing; it consists in *doing*, not in *feeling;* and it is a solemn thought for us all, especially for those who have been taught that the mere experience of happy or sorrowful feeling is the sum of all religion—that none are seen in the courts of heaven but servants —that is, those who are engaged in obedient activity. There, as the Lord's Prayer has taught us, the will of God is *done.* His servants do it perfectly, because they love Him perfectly. It is in the very essence of love to labour. It never can be still, never can be useless, never can contain itself, never can spare itself, never cease to spend itself for the object to which it is devoted.

It is distinguished by *rest.* For the rest of inaction is but the quiet of a stone, or the stillness of the grave, or the exhaustion of a spent and feeble nature. But there is a nobler rest than this. There is rest in health; there is rest in the musical repose of exquisitely balanced powers; there is rest to the desiring faculties when they *find* the thing desired; there is rest in the rapture of congenial employment; rest in the flow of

joyful strength; rest in the swift glide of the stream when it meets with no impediment. Such is the rest of the glorified. Perfect beings in a perfect world, rejoicing in their native element, having no weakness within, and no resisting force without, to check the outflow and expression of their loving natures; their activity, therefore, being easy, natural and necessary as light is to the sun, and fragrance to the flowers of spring—activity to them is rest.* Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest, not from their works, but only from their labours. It would be a labour for them not to work. To hush their music, and to stop their action, would be to them intolerable toil; they would be "weary with forbearing, and could not stay." So they "rest," yet they rest not day nor night.

It is distinguished by *variety*. The blessed God delights in variety. In all His works, along with perfect order, there is eternal change. There is no mountain exactly like another mountain; there are no two trees whose boughs bend into the same network of interlacing lines; no two leaves alike; no two clouds alike; no two waves alike; but the face of nature is infinitely diversified. So also is the church. You see no two men with the like endowments; no two spheres marked by exact

* "*Pleasure is the* reflex of unimpeded energy."—Sir W. Hamilton.

similarity. Each one has his own peculiar gift for his own peculiar station; some have to serve their Lord with the power of the pen, others with the power of the tongue; some by their poverty, others by their wealth; and each one has a distinct individuality of power and place and opportunity. We see Aaron with his eloquence, and Moses with his stammering speech. "There is a Jeremy to give the prophecy, and a Baruch to read it;" a Paul to plant, and an Apollos to water. One man is a "son of consolation," another a "son of thunder." One servant has five talents, another two, and another one. As the church in heaven is but the consummation of the church on earth, we may infer that the law of variety, which shines in this earthly exhibition of Christianity, and which prevails all over this region of existence, sheds its fascinations over Paradise, and lends its zest to the services of heaven.

It is distinguished by *perpetuity*. Our service now, scarcely lasts for one hour together, without interruption from some change of circumstance, or some fluctuation of temper or condition. It faints in the sunshine, and it falters in the storm; it may be wakeful in the day, but it sleeps in the night; and when at length the night of death shall come, "*no* man can work." But their service is *perpetual*; it will continue through eternity.

"They *shall* serve Him." "This means," says Bengel, "that there will be an everlasting continuance of the thing described." They serve Him at this moment, and "they *shall* serve Him." They will be serving Him ages hence, and still "they *shall* serve Him." Never will they reach a point in the flow of their existence when it shall cease to be said, "They *shall* serve Him." "Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, they will press forwards," and as age after age is numbered, with all their powers of strong, rich, rejoicing life life fresh, and ever fresh, young, and ever young—"they *shall* serve Him;" serve Him in a degree they never did before.

2. We see next, *their crowning privilege.* "They shall see His face."

This implies the *certain recognition of His presence.* To stand before the face of a person, is to stand in his presence; and as in Scripture phraseology "to see is to know," to see the face of God implies the certain recognition of His presence. When these servants of God entered His celestial courts, it was no new thing for them to be in His presence; but to many of them it was a new thing to know it with joyful certainty. A friend may be with us, when from weakness, from *blindness,* from defective memory or mental con-

fusion, we may not immediately recognise him. And so it may be with reference to the Heavenly Friend. When Jacob, utterly desolate, flung himself down to sleep on his stone-pillowed, star-canopied couch, "the Lord was in that place, yet he knew it not." When Job was in affliction, God never forsook him; yet the patriarch was unable to see His face through the veil of a mysterious dispensation, and therefore sighed out the prayer, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" When the fishermen were every moment expecting their frail skiff to founder in the midnight storm, Jesus was near them, walking to their aid; yet, until He flung His voice upon the tempest, they thought it was some dim, scintillating spectre sliding into light, and trembling in awful balance over the waves.

He was with Mary in the garden, but grief had sealed her powers of recognition; He was with the travellers on the road to Emmaus, but "their eyes were holden that they did not know Him;" and just so with regard to His spiritual presence—you may have it when you fail to recognise it. In that last wild midnight of the soul, what but His presence in the darkness could have saved your faith from shipwreck? In the day of sad imaginations which you shudder to remember, what arm but His could have held you up, "when sinking in

despair?" In many a dreary walk, when you thought yourselves alone, what but the touch of His secret Spirit could have made your "hearts burn within you," or have "opened up the Scriptures?" The faintest twinkling of holy truth, the lowest moan of prayer, and all true turnings to God, are indications of His presence—though it may be a presence veiled; and at such times you "entertain," not angels only, but the Lord of angels, "unawares." So it was once with the servants of God now in heaven. Many of them were nearly all their days in mourning for the imaginary absence of their Lord; some of them were victims of dire delusion; but He was "made known to them" at the end of the way. With the first flash of eternity, "their eyes were opened, and they knew Him!" Their souls sprang up surprised—were set all a-blaze with wonder and delight—delight that shall live for ever! See the infant, just waking up in the arms of his mother—at first, only half awake, he seems not to know her; but soon the puzzled look breaks into a rapid, radiant smile—*he sees her face!* But what words can paint the perfect alarm of delight which each redeemed but long-mourning soul has felt, when at length it reached the end of all its highest aspirations, and actually found itself in the *unveiled presence* of God. "As for me, I will behold

thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."*

Complete knowledge of the character and perfections of God must be also understood. The face is the index to the character and distinctive attributes of any being. To descend for a moment to the homeliest level of illustration:—In the face of the lion, you see courage; in the face of the lamb, gentleness; in the face of the gazelle, timidity. When suddenly introduced to a stranger, you instinctively look into his face, to see if you may trust him; and although he may be a man always secret, always guarded, never forgetting himself—the soul, however cautiously, looks at you through the face; and the escapes of thought from the eye, the play of light or shadow that flits along the countenance, will help you to form some estimate of that man's character. Hence, very naturally, in the poetry of the primitive ages, the "face" is another word for the character; and thoroughly to know it, and see into it, is thoroughly to know the real man. "The face of God," let it be reverentially spoken, is the character of God; to see it, is to know what God is. This is an attain-

* When Cowper died, till his features were closed from view, his kinsman, Mr. Johnson, observed an expression upon them, which he affectionately delighted to suppose "an index of the last thoughts and enjoyments of his soul, *in the gradual* escape from the depths of despondence, an expression of calmness *and composure*, mingled with holy surprise."—Bickersteth's *Life of Cowper*, *page 204.*

ment which at present can only be acquired imperfectly. True, "God hath shined with the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ,"—that is, the character of the unseen Father has its fullest expression in the character of the seen Son; but owing to the weakness of our sight, and the limitations of our sinful nature, that fullest expression is incomplete compared with what it will be. Like Moses, this Prophet of God, coming down from the mountain with His face lit up with glory, has put a veil over it, that the children of Israel may be able to converse with Him. We cannot yet bear many things He has to say respecting the Divine Being; and they are reserved for eternity. Not yet do we see the open face of God; we see but "parts of His ways." Figuratively speaking, we see His foot, or at least we see His footprint in the track of great providential events, and we know that the "Lord hath passed this way;" we see His hand, at least we see His handwriting, and we at once recognise His autograph in everything we thoughtfully inspect, from the sand-grain to the day-star; [illegible] flake of light that floats in the summer [illegible] clod of earth that crumbles in the [illegible] every bird on the bough, and ever[illegible] grass; but, as yet, we are [illegible] *Divine glory* full in the fac[illegible]

the saints who are on the "luminous side of death." On them alone that great secret lightens; they gaze directly on the very thoughts and conceptions of the Infinite Mind. Every film removed, every intervening veil of sense and sin withdrawn, every perceptive power heightened to its uttermost, they no longer "see through a glass darkly, but face to face." Each one, as he entered that blaze of splendour, might have uttered the words of wonder that once were spoken on earth, although with a new intensity of meaning: "It was a true report, O king, that I heard in mine own land, of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and see thy face."

These words further import *the highest station of honour in the service of God.* Like their Master, many of these heavenly beings, when on earth, received not honour from men. "They were destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy." They were not the makers of history, not the magicians of thought, not the wise, or the mighty, or the noble. Some were the poor of the poor, the scorned of the scorned, the

trampled on of the trampled on. From a place low as that of Lazarus at the rich man's gate, they are raised to a companionship high as that of Gabriel, who "stands in the presence of God." To stand in the presence of the Great King, is the station of princes, the honour that alone belongs to the royal family of heaven. In them the saying is fulfilled, "He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people." Theirs is the dignity of a life at court, the court of the "Ancient of Days." They can hardly believe it, even now—the transition from what they were to what they are is so stupendous and sublime. When they died they "passed out of darkness into marvellous light."

> "—— They passed
> Beyond the flaming bounds of time and space,
> The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
> Where angels tremble as they gaze,
> They saw——"

And there, where "there is no need of the sun," before the majesty of majesty, in the very joy of joy, and the very heaven of heaven, they serve their King for ever.

3. *Their distinguishing sign* next claims our attention. "His name shall be in their foreheads." This means that they shall wear the im-

print of His perfections. The name of a man is that by which he is identified and known; and as God is identified and known by His perfections, His perfections are called His name. To have God's name is to bear a resemblance to Him—to have what we call His image and likeness. The face on which they gaze must transform, by the quickening power of its glories, each adoring spirit into its living likeness. If you turn away *from* the sun, your face will be in shadow, but if you turn *to* it, your face will shine, and the sun's name will be imprinted in letters of light upon your forehead; and so, by a glorious necessity, those who see God will shine with His reflected name. This is the argument of the apostle, when he says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when we shall see Him, we shall be like Him, *for* we shall see Him *as He is;* and for this reason it was that our High Priest offered for His disciples the sublime intercession, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me may be where I am, *that they may behold my glory.*"

It also means that this imprint of the Divine perfections will be *open and visible.* By the seal of the Spirit the servants of God even on earth bear this impression; and it is essential, in order to authenticate their claims. But, too frequently, the mark is scarcely seen; it is within their hearts,

but it is not upon *their foreheads,* to be known and read of all men. Only He who knows the heart can trace it with absolute certainty. Infirmities disguise, or obscurities of station hide from view the mystic name written on many a pillar of grace. It is like some dim inscription on a monument, mouldering into indistinctness, and veiled by trailing leaves, overlooked by the casual traveller, and only deciphered by the antiquarian's eye.

As fire is hidden in the unstruck stone, as the future flower is hidden in the present root, as the gem is hidden by the rough incrustation round it, the grace of God is frequently hidden by the weakness and waywardness of man. But there it will not be so. No one in that world will be satisfied with a secret and latent piety; not one will say, "I make no profession;" no deprecating voice will make the plea—"Lord, I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine!" To intimate that the name of Jehovah will be so conspicuously visible on all His servants that you must see it if you see them, it is said to flame upon their very foreheads.

When, on one occasion, a crowd of crusaders approached the Holy City, and caught the first sight of its spires and turrets through the blue luminous tremors of the distance, some knelt in *silent praise,* some kissed the earth, some prayed

and laughed and wept in wild emotion; and knight and palmer, old man and little child, joined to raise the cry, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" And ought not a sight of the "heavenly Jerusalem" to inspire within us a vehement heavenliness, and make us in greater earnest to be there? To some, perhaps, these thoughts may be deemed weakly sentimental, and imaginative. "Be more practical," say they; "preach to us the religion of common life; tell us something more immediately relating to the homely and tangible duties of to-day." But, in truth, nothing is more intensely practical than a heavenly spirit; nothing more fits us for earth than that which fits us for heaven.

It might be harmful to the soul to spend itself in discussing mere theories of a future state, or in simply weaving visions of indolent delight. The heaven of the sensualist, the heaven of the world-lover, even the heaven of the poet, might do us no good to think upon. But a heaven of knowledge, a heaven of service, a heaven of holy love, must be a transforming and profitable study; and if, indeed, we have "a good hope through grace," it will sometimes be well for us to quit the atmosphere of earthly thought, in which we are forced to spend our ordinary life, to climb to a higher region, breathe a purer air, and try to catch, how-

ever dimly, some glimpses of the true Jerusalem; always remembering that it is only the eye of faith and the glass of inspiration that can "make the pearly gates appear." This is what we have been doing now; let us do it frequently. When Henry the Fourth of France asked the Duke of Alva's opinion respecting some of the astronomical mysteries of heaven, he said, "Sire, I have so much to do on earth that I have no leisure to think of heaven." Such a conviction would be ruin to us: we must think of heaven, if we would be prepared for heaven; we must think of heaven, if we would rightly do our work on earth.

Yet let us guard against a fatal misconception. We must, indeed, "think of heaven, if we would prepare for heaven;" but mere thoughts of heaven have no secret and magical virtue to wash away your sins, or to work out either a title or a fitness for the celestial state. They may help the faith of those who already believe, bringing into exercise that new life which will one day sing the new song, and thus to them alone, and in this sense alone, they may be preparative; but if you are unforgiven and unregenerate, the only thoughts of heaven that can tend to prepare you for it are those which, like the prodigal's thoughts of home, *prompt the* resolve to arise and go to your Father.

To you, the more appropriate form of monition would be, You *must* believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone you can have access to the Father; you *must* be born again; for "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." If you live and die out of Christ, heaven is nothing to you. Your death-day must then be a day of final farewell to all bright, friendly, familiar things; like Cain, you will then say, with a feeling of amazed, awe-struck desolation, which only the lost spirit just parted from its mortal dwelling-place can feel, "Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; *and from thy face shall I be hid.*" That day is approaching. Death, that cold, stern, silent messenger of justice, is at hand. Soon you will hear his step upon the threshold, and his hand upon the door; you will see his shadow—you will feel his touch—you will know that all is over.

But that hour has not yet struck. It is not yet too late to fly to Christ; not yet are the gates of the city shut. The precious blood of atonement is as free and efficacious as ever. The river of the water of life is still flowing at your very feet; all *things* in the economy in which you live wear an *aspect* of invitation. Voices from heaven say,

Come; "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

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